

# *The Church Libertyville*

*by J.W. Conley*



THE  
CHURCH AT LIBERTYVILLE



# The Church at Libertyville

AS SEEN BY  
THOMAS BRADLEY

*Edited by*

JOHN WESLEY CONLEY, D. D.

*That he might present it to himself a  
glorious church*

*—Paul*



Philadelphia  
The Griffith and Rowland Press  
1630 Chestnut Street

Copyright 1906 by the  
**AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY**

---

Published January, 1907

**From the Society's own Press**

## Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. EXPLANATORY . . . . .	7
II. A CASE OF DISCIPLINE . . . . .	12
III. MRS. PAXTON AND THE MISSION SUNDAY-SCHOOL . . . . .	21
IV. THE PASTOR'S VACATION . . . . .	33
V. CHIEFLY CONCERNING MRS. DOLITTLE . .	46
VI. JUDGE STRAIGHT AND SOME OTHERS . . .	59
VII. WINDS OF DOCTRINE . . . . .	73
VIII. THE FINANCE COMMITTEE . . . . .	85
IX. THE SEXTON AND OTHER TROUBLES . . .	98
X. CONTRARY MINDS . . . . .	109
XI. CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH . . . . .	122
XII. FINDING A PASTOR . . . . .	138
XIII. AUNT DORCAS . . . . .	158
XIV. RULES AND REGULATIONS . . . . .	172
XV. A FAITHFUL STEWARD . . . . .	187



# THE CHURCH AT LIBERTYVILLE

## I

### **E**xplanatory

IBERTYVILLE is a flourishing Western town, or city its residents call it. It is something of a railroad center, has a variety of factories, and is surrounded by a broad stretch of exceedingly fertile farming country. It has a thoroughly mixed population, all classes, all sections of the country, and many foreign lands being well represented. It has its full share of the enterprise, boastfulness, democratic spirit, conceit, interest in politics, and carelessness about religion, characteristic of some portions, at least, of the section of the country in which it is located.

The First Baptist Church was organized back in the fifties, and for many years has been one of the leading churches of the

## The Church at Libertyville

place. It has had an interesting history and, on the whole, has had a prosperous career. Of course it has had its ups and downs. It had a long struggle with a burdensome debt which an over-ambitious pastor encouraged it to incur, but did not help it pay; for when the debt began to be troublesome, he resigned and went to another church to lead it in a building and mortgaging enterprise. He claimed that a church debt is a good thing, and his conduct showed that he regarded it as a good thing to run away from.

I remember that it was a day of great rejoicing in the Libertyville church when the mortgage papers were burned. But there were other troubles besides the debt. I distinctly recall one time when the work was not going on satisfactorily; in fact conditions were very discouraging. Two of the deacons became fully convinced that the difficulty was with the pastor, and that his usefulness on that field was ended, and finally, after they had frequently conferred together upon the subject, and had taken a few others into their confidence, they decided that it was their duty "to wait upon" their pastor and tell him how they felt. With a solemn sense of the responsibility

## Explanatory

resting upon them, and of their own unworthiness and with most earnest assurances of their great love for him, and for the church, they told him that they thought his work in Libertyville was done and suggested that in the near future he resign. Of course they wanted him to take a little time to look around and secure another pastorate; but greatly to their surprise he did not appreciate their great kindness and their disinterested and unselfish motives in coming to him, and told them that if they would mind their own business and not go around talking to everybody about the pastor it would be much better for them and for the church, and that he did not believe the church would ever prosper until there were some radical changes in its official Board.

On the following Sunday he told the church that two of the deacons had asked him to resign, and that he would leave at once if the people wanted him to go, but that he would never be driven out by a couple of meddlesome deacons, who were trying to run things in a high-handed way. I think he pursued an unwise course. Several stormy business meetings followed, and when the air cleared again it was found

## The Church at Libertyville

that the pastor and the two deacons had all resigned.

There were other periods of brief disturbance, but all things considered, it was a prosperous and harmonious church, and was widely known for its good works.

But I must explain how it happens that I am writing about the Libertyville church. For thirty years, from 1868, when I came to Libertyville to engage in business, until 1898, when I retired from business and removed to another city to make my home, I was an active member of this church.

Having leisure now I find my mind dwelling upon the experiences of those years, and it has occurred to me that others might be interested in some of the things which interest me so much. I do not want to gossip about my old friends, but I have a feeling that they are friends who are worth knowing, and that it will be of profit to others to become acquainted with them.

I have no thought of attempting to write a history of the church; few would care to read that; but I simply want to write down what comes to me as I live over again in memory the delightful years I spent in the dear old church. I want to tell of the different kinds of good folks whom I knew,

## Explanatory

and introduce them to any who may care to read what I shall write.

I sincerely hope that I may deal justly and kindly with all whom I may mention. It is possible that I shall make some mistakes, as some things which I shall record are based upon hearsay, and then too, my memory may be at fault sometimes; but I shall be careful and try not to do injustice to any one. I trust that I may have as generous an appreciation of the virtues of my friends, and as charitable a view of their faults, as I want them to have of mine.

I have a good friend who writes poetry, although he insists that he simply writes rhymes and that it should not be dignified with the name poetry. Well, be that as it may, he gets some excellent thoughts into his rhymes, and that is more than some poets do. I have persuaded him to do some writing for me to liven up a little these reminiscences.

As I look over the years spent in the Libertyville church I heartily approve the following, which he handed to me a few days ago:

There are many, many good folks,  
That down here we live among;

## The Church at Libertyville

Tis the bad and not the good ones,  
Who are likely to die young.

There are many kinds of good folks,  
They belong to different lots;  
Some are good, real good all over,  
Some are only good in spots.

Some are good from love or duty,  
Some are good because of fear;  
Some are frank and open-hearted,  
Some are just a little queer.

## II

### A Case of Discipline

There are those who are good,  
But sorely they try us,  
For it seems that their goodness  
Is cut on the bias.

 OR many years I was one of the deacons of the Libertyville church; and I have a distinct recollection of the brethren who served with me and of many of our meetings. They were all good men, but differed widely in their way of looking at things, and sometimes we had questions before us upon which it was not easy for us to reach an agreement. There

### A Case of Discipline

comes to my mind now the meeting at which we considered the case of Harry Weeks. The deacons were all present—Stearns, Goodwill, Smith, Eager, Perkins, myself, and Doctor Spear. I say "Doctor," for he was particular about having his honorary title employed, although he had been out of the active ministry for many years and had been giving his time to secular affairs. He was always careful to put in the "D. D." when he signed his name, and Mrs. Spear habitually referred to him as "the doctor." There were two things about him which I was never able fully to understand—one was, how he secured his doctorate, and the other was, why he quit preaching. I may say in passing, although I cannot vouch for the truth of it, that it was currently reported that he contributed a generous sum of money to a small college, and also made large promises in the way of influence, and that the college out of gratitude for such disinterested kindness conferred this degree upon him. This is probably a correct explanation, for he certainly was not thus honored because of large scholastic attainments, or marked success in the ministry. As to his giving up the pastorate, he reported that he quit preach-

## The Church at Libertyville

ing because of throat trouble and failure of his voice. But if this were the case he must have made a remarkable recovery, for during my long acquaintance with him his voice was the strongest thing about him. Some said his second wife's money had something to do with his giving up the ministry, but I do not know about this and I must not gossip. I do know, however, that he married a wealthy widow.

At the time of this particular meeting to consider the case of Harry Weeks, Rev. Joshua Green was pastor. He was a young man fresh from the theological seminary and had some rather over-wrought views as to the necessity of church discipline. He preached a sermon on the subject, in which he said: "The church is weighted down, handicapped, and corrupted with a worldly, sinful, and unworthy membership. Judgment must begin at the house of God, the Augean stables must be cleansed; our first work must be with a whip of small cords, that the church of God may be purified and made meet for the Master's use." This sermon was preached the Sunday before the deacons' meeting of which I am about to tell you. The pastor called the meeting to order and after a few preliminary matters had

## A Case of Discipline

been disposed of he said: "Now, brethren, we will listen to the report of our committee on the case of Mr. Harry Weeks." Deacon Stearns, who regarded it as his special prerogative to serve as chairman of all such committees, had been duly appointed at a previous meeting. He was a small, spare man, who looked and acted as though he thought it a sin to enjoy anything in this life, and especially anything that ministered to the wants of the body. He was given to various dietetic vagaries and rarely ate more than two meals a day, and his looks indicated that they did not agree with him.

"In cooking for Obadiah," his wife had been heard to say, "I do not have to consult his taste, for he never eats anything because he likes it."

He was somewhat stooped, and his head, set well forward on his shoulders, gave his long nose a peculiarly insinuating appearance. His face always wore the determined look of the man who never questions his own opinions, and who knows no difference between a mountain and a mole-hill. Called upon to report, he arose and solemnly wiped and adjusted his spectacles, drew a formidable-looking paper from his side pocket, cleared his throat and read:

## The Church at Libertyville

WHEREAS, Mr. Harry Weeks, a member of the First Baptist Church, of Libertyville, has so far forgotten his covenant obligations as to disgrace himself and scandalize the church by becoming openly intoxicated; and

WHEREAS, for the church to continue in its membership persons guilty of outbreaking sin is for it to become partaker with them in guilt, therefore,

*Resolved*, that we, the deacons of said church, do hereby recommend that the hand of fellowship be withdrawn from the said Harry Weeks, and that he be duly excluded from the church.

(Signed) DEACON OBADIAH STEARNS,  
REV. JABEZ SPEAR, D. D.,  
Committee.

Following the reading of this report, the pastor said: "I greatly regret the necessity for such severe measures, but since coming to Libertyville, I have noted with increasing concern the laxity of discipline in the church and the growing spirit of worldliness, and feel that it is time for the work of purifying the church to begin."

"I would like to ask," said Charley Goodwill—I call him Charley, for that is what everybody called him—"if the committee saw Harry and tried to help him back to the right way of living."

"Permit me to say in behalf of the committee," replied Doctor Spear, "that

## A Case of Discipline

we waited upon Mr. Weeks, and found him uncommunicative and apparently wanting in any proper appreciation of the enormity and disgraceful character of his sin. He said he was sorry and that he did not want to be turned out of the church, but he also said that he did not believe your committee had the remotest idea of what his temptations were. Just as though a mere boy could teach men of our experience. We labored faithfully with him, but saw no evidence of godly repentance, and so were compelled to report as we have."

"Yes," added Deacon Stearns, "I fully agree with the pastor, that this is a time for decisive action. I never was in favor of taking that scapegrace Weeks into the church. I knew he would not hold out, and have been looking for just this thing. He was brought up a Unitarian and never had any clear understanding of the doctrines of grace, and the sooner we cut him off the better for the church; and there are others who must mend their ways or they will have to go too. I am thankful the good work is begun, and that we have a pastor who believes in vigorous church discipline."

"But," said Deacon Perkins, "we who

## The Church at Libertyville

are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. It has always seemed to me that church discipline means to save, rather than to cast out. It was said of the Master, 'A bruised reed will he not break and smoking flax will he not quench.' If there is any hope at all of saving Harry Weeks, I am in favor of giving him another trial."

"That is just my idea exactly," broke in Charley Goodwill, "and now let me tell you what I did. I was not appointed on any committee, but I went to see Harry, poor fellow, on my own responsibility; and I found him sick and broken-hearted. He said he meant to do right, and for months fought an awful appetite and was apparently getting the better of it, and prayed constantly for God to help him. He said no one who had not experienced it could ever know what such a struggle meant. He has to work very hard, and last week some special orders came in at the factory and he had to work all night; and in the morning just as he was starting for his room, tired, half-sick, and terribly depressed, a man offered him a drink of beer. He said that in an instant it seemed as though he was possessed with the very demons of darkness, and reason and everything else

## A Case of Discipline

were swallowed up and he knew nothing but an insane desire to drink, and he seized the cup and drank it and went down. He said he loved the church, and that the few months he had been a member had been the best of his life, and that he would like to try again, but he was so weak and so disgraced that he feared there was no use of his trying any more. He cried like a child and seemed to be standing right on the brink of the pit of despair, and if we take this action I believe we will push him off. I tell you, brethren, I will never vote for that report. If the church of Jesus Christ is for anything in this world it is to help such poor fellows."

"Praise the Lord," said Deacon Eager.

Deacon Stearns again spoke: "I would not belittle the view taken by Brother Goodwill, but this is not a question to be decided by emotion or sentiment; we must recognize the dignity of our position as the conservators of the purity of the church, and must act from a stern sense of duty. 'If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off.'"

"But," exclaimed Charley Goodwill, "Harry Weeks is not the right hand of this church, but he is a weak member, needing our patience and help, and I would rather

## The Church at Libertyville

cut off my right hand than raise it in vote to expel the poor fellow from the church."

Deacon Smith, a middle-aged, intelligent, broad-minded man, now spoke: "I appreciate the fact that there are times when severe measures of discipline are necessary. Amputation in surgery is sometimes demanded, but the first thought is to save if possible. So in the church, exclusion should be the last resort after all other measures have failed. This is Harry Weeks' first offense. I am most heartily in favor of giving him another trial, not to watch him and suspect him, but to get close to him and help him. Perhaps we ought to regard it as giving *us* another chance rather than him, for I must confess that I fear I have not done my duty in trying to help him to better things."

The pastor added, "Perhaps I have not given sufficient thought to this aspect of church discipline. At all events, I am in favor of giving Harry Weeks another chance."

But Deacon Stearns was not satisfied. "I have heard this kind of talk before. It will do no good. I had hoped that the day for better things had come. But since you all seem opposed to this report I have con-

## **Mrs. Parton and the Mission Sunday-school**

ferred with Doctor Spear and if there is no objection we will withdraw it and consider ourselves relieved from all further responsibility in this matter."

"If there is no objection," said the pastor, "the report is withdrawn, and Brother Harry Weeks will continue a member of this church."

There was no objection.

## III

### **Mrs. Parton and the Mission Sunday-school**

Some are good, so very good,  
They never halt nor waver,  
But their goodness is the insipid sort,  
Which has no strength nor flavor.

HEN my poetic friend handed me the above I thought at once of Mrs. Paxton and her experience in the mission Sunday-school.

Shortly after Rev. Joshua Green became our pastor he insisted that our church must have a mission, and he selected what was known as "Squatters' Ranch" as a suitable location for it.

## The Church at Libertyville

Trustee Slocum was afraid the church could not stand the additional expense, and thought we had work enough in our church school, without bothering ourselves about the hoodlums of that disreputable part of the city.

Mrs. Paxton said: "I am delighted with our dear pastor's plan; we ought to have more interest in these poor, dear children, whose lives are so restricted and whose hungry hearts are continually yearning for better things. I for one shall place myself upon the altar for this work."

Mrs. Paxton was a good woman. When pressed for an opinion all her neighbors would admit this. She had been a faithful member of the church many years. The chief characteristic of her face was a sweet, sickly, wearisome smile, which was always there, and which was as expressionless as the windows to a vacant house. But Mrs. Paxton was a good woman, so good, in fact, that ordinary people did not care to be with her very much.

At one time Deacon Eager felt called upon to urge Mr. Paxton to come into the church, but he replied: "We have too much religion in the family already, and I am not willing to get any until Mrs. Pax-

## **Mrs. Parton and the Mission Sunday-school**

ton reduces her investment." Now that I have referred to her domestic affairs I am reminded of her first husband, and before telling of her mission Sunday-school experience I think I must say just a word about her resignation at the time of his death, as many spoke of it at the time.

Mrs. Sharp declared: "She certainly did not love him very much or she could not smile as she does whenever his death is mentioned."

The pastor told me in confidence that she actually asked him to have the doxology sung at the funeral. I suppose we ought not to talk about such things, but I must say that her resignation seemed to me to be a little overdone. I do not think Mrs. Sharp was right in attributing it to lack of love for her husband, but it was simply her way of doing.

When my wife said to her: "My dear sister, you have my deepest sympathy in your great bereavement," she smiled and replied: "It is all right; I would not bring him back if I could."

When Mrs. Sharp heard this she said: "Poor man; I don't believe he would come back if he could."

But then Mrs. Sharp was never very

## The Church at Libertyville

charitable in her judgments. Still, Deacon Perkins, who was present during his last hours, said that when he was told that he had but a short time to live he gave a sigh as of relief and said: "I am willing to go; I don't care to stay here any longer."

I admit that Mrs. Sharp probably misinterpreted his meaning, still I do think Deacon Perkins was right when he said: "There is such a thing as being too resigned." But I must come back to the mission Sunday-school in "Squatters' Ranch."

Pastor Green called a number of us together a couple of weeks before the time fixed for opening the school to plan for the work. He had had some experience in a mission school in Chicago. "The most difficult pupils to manage in this school," he said, "will be the boys from ten to fourteen years of age."

Mrs. Paxton spoke up at once. "I shall be delighted to take a class of such boys. They have never felt the beneficent power of kindness and love. My heart goes out toward them, and I am confident that I can do them good."

"I had a class of that kind in Pittsburg once," Mrs. Sharp replied, "and you

## Mrs. Paxton and the Mission Sunday-school

couldn't hire me to try such a job again. The only way to manage such little rascals is to have two teachers for every boy, one to hold him and another to teach him."

"My dear, I fear you did not try the all-prevailing power of love upon them," said Mrs. Paxton, while her habitual smile lighted up with the joy of anticipated conquests.

"Love's all right and I believe in it," Mrs. Sharp replied, "but I don't believe in casting pearls before swine."

"But I know what power love has," replied Mrs. Paxton; "you ought to see how my dear boys at the jail are touched by my visits to them, and how deeply they are moved when I talk with them about the innocence of their childhood days and their mothers' love."

I had met the sheriff, a friend of mine, the day before and he had said: "Mr. Bradley, can't you give that Mrs. Paxton work enough to do so she will stay away from the jail? The boys are saying that they must have a change of venue or some other change that will protect them from her smiles and sweetness. They insist that they were never sentenced to the kind of punishment which she is inflicting upon them."

## The Church at Libertyville

But the mission Sunday-school was opened in due time. It so happened that my class was next to that of Mrs. Paxton, and I could not help noting some of the things which happened in that quarter.

"My dear," she said to a frowzy-headed, dirty, ragged urchin, and was about to ask his name, when another boy shouted: "He ain't a deer; he's a Dago." She smiled her most subduing smile and laid her hand lovingly on the red head of the interrupter: "It is not nice to use such names. The Bible says, 'Little children, love one another.'" At this juncture another boy, noticing her hand, exclaimed: "Teacher, teacher, look out there; you'll burn your hand." In the roar that followed somebody managed to stick a pin into the red-headed boy and he jumped so that he almost upset Mrs. Paxton's chair. The class then, as by some sort of magic, became very quiet and respectful, and Mrs. Paxton proceeded to enroll their names. But such names! As I remember them now, there were Jesse James, John Sullivan, Pete Dailey, Buffalo Bill, and several others. This was organization day, and no attempt was made to teach the lesson. When the roll was called at the close, the names in

## Mrs. Paxton and the Mission Sunday-school

Mrs. Paxton's class created a sensation, and every boy in the class responded to each name, and Mrs Paxton looked on helpless, but still smiling.

On the next Sunday the school assembled in the midst of great confusion, but at length order was secured and the superintendent said a few words on the importance of singing and expressed a hope that all would sing.

Mrs. Paxton said to her class, as she gave them books and assisted them in finding the place: "Now, my dear boys, there is nothing so sweet and inspiring and helpful as music, and I hope every one of you will take part in this beautiful service." The boys were quiet and seemingly much interested, and she smiled with peculiar satisfaction, evidently thinking that love was telling, and that Mrs. Sharp would soon see what a woman imbued with the right spirit could do. "Now, all ready; sing," said Brother Joy; and they sang, everybody sang, every boy in Mrs. Paxton's class sang, utterly regardless of time or tune, seeming to think that the important thing was noise. It was something extraordinary. Instead of an organ, a calliope was needed to lead such singing, and noth-

## The Church at Libertyville

ing short of a megaphone would have made Brother Joy's voice heard. At the end of the second verse the superintendent tried to stop the cyclone of song. The organ stopped and the leader stopped, but the tumult went on to the end of the hymn.

The smile on Mrs. Paxton's face for the first time in years almost disappeared, and there were traces of a troubled and alarmed look.

The superintendent did not think best to attempt a second song that day.

The next thing on the programme was the collection. Mrs. Paxton rallied at once from the shock of the singing, and explained: "Now we are going to give something for the dear Lord's work. He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' We ought to give from love and gratitude to him for all the good things he has given to us."

"He ain't never give me no good things," exclaimed one of the boys. But the collection went on and the result was indeed a "collection." I saw a poker chip (at least I supposed it was that), a nail, a beer check, a piece of tobacco, and several buttons. The only money in it all was a punched nickel. I shall not attempt to relate all that hap-

## Mrs. Parton and the Mission Sunday-school

pened that day, but at the close I heard Mrs. Paxton asking her boys each to find a passage of Scripture which had the word love in it and be prepared to recite it the following Sunday.

The next Sunday, after the singing, which was slightly improved, Mrs. Paxton began talking to her class about the Bible. She held up a Bible and asked: "How many of my dear boys can tell me what book this is?" One exclaimed: "A prayer-book"; another, "Catechism"; another, "A cook-book." "Oh, no; you are all mistaken; it is the Bible; all say 'Bible,'" and they all said "Bible" in a way that caused a momentary suspension of all other operations in the school. She then said: "There are two divisions to the Bible; who can tell me what they are?" "Long division and short division," was the prompt reply. "No, no," and the smile was beginning to fade from her face. "I mean two parts; who can tell me what they are?" "Forepart and back-part." "My dears, you ought to stop to think before you speak so disrespectfully about God's book," and her smile was almost gone.

Mr. Paxton was present, and while not seeming to listen, I could see that he was

## The Church at Libertyville

greatly interested for some reason in his wife's work. "Now," she continued, "there are two parts to the Bible; one is called the Old Testament; what is the other?" At once the red-headed boy shouted: "Young Testament." I do not know what she would have done next, but just then one of the boys exclaimed: "Teacher, I got a verse about love!" Her smile returned. "How many of you remembered my request to learn a verse on love?" Every hand went up, and several of the boys stood up to express their eagerness to recite a passage of Scripture.

Mrs. Paxton's face beamed with expectancy. I do not know how those boys ever found those passages of Scripture, but they must have had help. Here are some of them as I recall them:

The first boy stood up and in a voice to be heard all over the room said: "Let us take our fill of love." The next one, looking directly at Mr. Paxton, exclaimed: "Husbands, love your wives." The next, a poor, hungry-looking urchin, recited in a high-pitched voice: "Make me savory meat, such as I love." Another: "With their mouth they showed much love"; and the next: "Every one loveth gifts."

## Mrs. Parton and the Mission Sunday-school

There was consternation depicted on the face of Mrs. Paxton, as it came the red-headed boy's turn. I glanced at Mr. Paxton. He was looking out of the window, but a broad smile covered his features. The boy spoke with a voice that held the attention of every one in the room: "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." When he sat down Mrs. Paxton was deathly pale and at once arose and went to her husband and said she was ill and must go home.

She never returned to the school. She said her health would not permit the extra work. Her husband was very anxious to have her continue and expressed a great interest in the neglected boys of "Squatters' Ranch."

Mrs. Sharp said: "I don't think he cares so much for what his wife can do for the boys as for what the boys can do for her." But she never came back, and in the course of a few weeks she was in her place in the church with her old smile fully restored.

After she gave up the boys in the mission school a young fellow, James Rush—the boys called him "Jim"—took the class. He was just home from college, where he had been right-tackle on the football team,

## The Church at Libertyville

and was an all-around athlete and fine fellow. The first Sunday that he taught the class I was surprised to see the boys all gathered close around him and evidently filled with interest. I listened and heard him telling them all about the great football game in which he had taken part a short time before. I wondered how he could get any religious lessons out of football, but before he was through he was telling them of the training he had to go through and how a fellow could not amount to anything anywhere without training.

The next Sunday they were all comparing jack-knives, and before they had done they were "cutting knives," and then I heard Brother Rush explaining to the boys that the best knife was the one that had the best stuff in it, and that boys must have good stuff in their characters if they were going to do anything worth while and stand up against the world.

I went to the Sunday-school some time ago, when I was back on a visit, and it is wonderful what has been accomplished. Brother James Rush is superintendent now, and he has a young men's club in connection with the school that is doing a splendid work. As I listened to the well-drilled

## The Pastor's Vacation

chorus under the direction of a red-headed young man, and heard the inspiring singing, I remembered the scene ten years before, and said: "Love has conquered—love and common sense."

## IV

### The Pastor's Vacation

Some are thoughtful, loving and kind,  
Unselfish, warm-hearted and true;  
While some are harsh and stern of mind,  
And unsympathetic, whatever they do.

 OFTEN think of Rev. Joshua Green's first vacation. He worked very hard and had been with us four years without any rest. He often said that he could find no time for a vacation. He was sincere in this and really believed it. But his work began to wear on him, and it became evident that his health was failing. He, however, made no complaints and, if possible, worked harder than ever.

At the woman's meetings Mrs. Dolittle remarked: "I am sure Brother Green is not well. I am afraid he is going into an early decline. If he would only give up

## The Church at Libertyville

Doctor Slocum and employ Doctor Postwell he would soon be all right."

"Doctor Postwell, indeed," said Mrs. Sharp. "If I wanted to die I would send for him. He made short work of old Squire Hobbs. He isn't fit to doctor a—"

Before Mrs. Sharp could tell what he was not fit to doctor, Mrs. Paxton, thinking she saw trouble coming, interrupted her and smiling sweetly said: "My dears, we must remember that Doctor Slocum is an official member of our church, and it might cause hard feelings if our pastor should employ some other physician."

"Yes," added Mrs. Perkins, "I suppose he must take church medicine if it kills him. I for one don't believe in being as sectarian as all that."

"But," said Mrs. Paxton, "we must be willing to sacrifice our personal feelings for the good of the cause."

"I suppose," added Mrs. Dolittle, "that is the way you felt when you had Doctor Slocum treat your first husband." I have often noticed that when people get discussing the relative merits of their family physicians they are quite liable to lose their tempers. It was fortunate, therefore, that just at this stage of the conversation the

## The Pastor's Vacation

pastor came in and the discussion stopped. But my wife said that several remarked to her that the pastor did certainly look ill.

At the next deacons' meeting I brought the matter up and Charley Goodwill said: "It is very evident that the pastor is not well, and that something ought to be done about it."

Deacon Smith, who was also head usher, said: "I have noticed quite a marked falling off in the congregations lately. The pastor's preaching is not so interesting as it used to be. He takes an awful gloomy view of things. There is Mr. Hope, who used to come regularly to church, and he gave liberally too, has not been near for three months. I told him the other day that we missed him and invited him to come again and he replied: 'I like a good funeral sermon once in a while, but I can't stand one every Sunday.'"

I noticed Deacon Stearns was getting restless while Brother Smith was speaking; he now interrupted him. "I regard that as an insult to our pastor, and am surprised that any one would repeat such a statement. I for one want to say that I never heard Brother Green preach so well before as he has done of late. His sermons are

## The Church at Libertyville

powerful and searching. He is hewing to the line. He is just coming to see the sins of the people and the degeneracy of the times. The fact that the congregations are falling off is a hopeful indication. The apostle says: 'The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.' In my humble judgment that time has arrived in Libertyville and Brother Green has come to the kingdom for a time like this."

"Well," replied Deacon Smith, "I don't believe the gospel was designed to drive people away. Jesus said: 'If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me,' and I don't see how the world is going to be converted by preaching to empty pews and to a few old, hard-headed saints, who never take anything to themselves anyhow."

Deacon Stearns evidently thought this was designed as a reflection upon himself, and was about to reply when Brother Goodwill spoke: "It is not a question, brethren, of sound doctrine or empty pews, but it is a question of Brother Green's health. Doctor Slocum tells me that the pastor is in a very critical condition nervously, and is in danger of complete collapse unless he has a good rest with a thorough change. I am heartily in favor of his having a vacation,

## The Pastor's Vacation

and I am thinking some of going along with him to see that he rests and has a good time."

Charley Goodwill was a general favorite and was always doing generous and helpful things. He had a large class of young people in the Sunday-school and was popular among them. His genial face, cheerful voice, and warm handshake were full of inspiration to courage and hopefulness. His name told just what he was.

Perhaps I ought to say in passing that Deacon Stearns thought he made too much of the social element in his class-work, and also thought he lacked dignity. In fact, he felt called upon at one time to labor with him in reference to this. It crept out in some way, some time afterward, that Brother Goodwill said to him: "I would rather have no dignity at all than to have the dignity of an icicle, and I would rather speak without thinking than to speak after the kind of thinking which some people do."

The deacon told Mrs. Stearns that his interview was unsatisfactory, and she did not express any regret. He observed this and said: "If Charley Goodwill did not have so many sympathizers it would be much better for him and also for the church.

## The Church at Libertyville

But I have done my duty by him whether it does any good or not."

Doctor Spear was greatly troubled about his teaching and was afraid he was not entirely sound and was sure that many of his Scripture interpretations did not agree with Matthew Henry, and he also felt that he did not get hold of the deep spiritual teachings of the word.

When some one told Brother Goodwill about this he said: "I would rather not be sound than to be all sound."

But I am not a judge of these matters. I do know, however, that he made his teaching practical, and that he greatly interested and helped the young people. It is possible that if he had gotten hold of the deeper things and had stuck close to Matthew Henry, his class would have been as small and his teaching as dry as that of Doctor Spear. But I must come back to the deacons' meeting and to the pastor's vacation.

No sooner had Charley Goodwill spoken of a vacation than Doctor Spear was aroused. "I preached for ten years," said he, "and never thought of such a thing as a vacation. I gave myself to my work and the Lord gave me strength to do it. The

## The Pastor's Vacation

devil never takes any vacation. In my judgment this modern vacation fad is destroying the church. The trouble with preachers to-day is they are too lazy and spend too much time studying higher criticism. If they would be content to preach the old gospel and get out and do more visiting the Lord would take care of them. I know from experience. I know as you cannot, and you can't change my opinion."

"But, Doctor Spear, I have always supposed," said Deacon Smith, "that you left the ministry because your health broke down; perhaps if you had taken a vacation you might still be preaching the gospel."

"No, no, you misunderstand," the doctor said; "my voice failed, and that is quite a different thing."

I think I have already stated that it was currently reported that his voice failed at the same time that he married a rich widow, but no allusion was made to this. Deacon Perkins, however, did add: "But it seems, doctor, that rest enabled you to entirely recover your voice." The doctor was not pleased at the turn matters had taken and replied with some feeling: "I insist that my private matters be not discussed. I am opposed to Brother Green's taking a

## The Church at Libertyville

vacation, but if you all insist upon it I shall not make any trouble."

After further debate it was voted to recommend that our pastor have a month's vacation on full salary. Deacon Stearns voted against it, and Doctor Spear did not vote at all. All the others voted heartily for it.

When Brother Goodwill called and told the pastor what was proposed he said: "I do not think I ought to go away. I fear I would be unfaithful to dying souls and then, as Doctor Spear often says, 'The devil never takes a vacation.'"

"But, pastor," interrupted Brother Goodwill, "you certainly do not take the devil as your example. When the Master was here he said to his apostles at one time, 'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile,' and what you need is to get apart into some desert place where the fishing and boating are good and rest awhile."

"But," said the pastor, "I cannot leave my wife and the children; I am needed here to help look after things."

Mrs. Green, a good, sensible, devoted wife, appreciating the situation and longing for some of the sunshine of former days

## The Pastor's Vacation

in the home, at once spoke: "Oh, we shall miss you greatly, but we can get along all right and will appreciate you all the better when you come back; and then if you do not go and should break down, as the doctor fears you will, I do not know what we would do."

Finally the pastor told Brother Goodwill that he would think about it. That evening the trustees had a meeting and made up a liberal purse to pay the pastor's vacation expenses.

When the recommendation of the deacons was laid before the church for action I shall never forget the remarks made by Elder Heartwell. Elder Heartwell was an aged minister, who had been a faithful pastor for nearly fifty years and having been compelled to give up work on account of failing strength, was making his home with his daughter, Mrs. Sweet. Everybody loved the elder, and his presence was a blessing to the church. His prayer-meeting talks were wonderfully helpful. He had grown old with a charity, a sweetness, and a hopefulness beautiful to see.

After several had spoken in favor of the vacation, Deacon Stearns arose and said: "If Brother Green needs a vacation on

## The Church at Libertyville

account of his health, I suppose he ought to have it, but I want to bear testimony that I never heard him or any one else preach more of the real old heart-searching, bone-and-marrow dividing and law-magnifying truth than he has of late. It has been like manna to my soul, and if giving him a vacation is going to change his preaching, I am opposed to his going, and I believe that if he will stand to his post and continue this kind of preaching the Lord will take care of his health."

I saw Doctor Spear start to get up and then take his seat again. I suspect he was afraid the question of his losing his voice and quitting the ministry might be brought up again.

Then Elder Heartwell slowly rose. It was evident by the saddened expression of his benevolent face that his mind was troubled. "My thoughts go back to-night," he said, "to a very painful experience of many years ago. Though it was so long ago I cannot recall it without great sadness, and I seldom ever speak of it. I was a young minister then in my first pastorate. I had worked very hard in college and seminary, having been compelled to pay my own way. I entered upon my

## The Pastor's Vacation

pastorate weakened in body and given somewhat to looking upon the darker side of things. I worked on for three years with fair success, but took no rest. Then I began to be overwhelmed with the awfulness of the sins around me, and irritated by what I thought the coldness and worldliness of the church. I preached a hard and forbidding religion and took a grim pleasure in doing so. Some of the brethren spoke to me about it, but I resented it, and thought them cowardly and hypocritical. My wife talked kindly with me and tried to help me, but I thought she was becoming time-serving and was afraid my salary would not be paid. Matters went from bad to worse. The congregations dwindled to a mere handful, and I charged the trouble to the church. I was nervous, irritable, and headstrong.

“Finally the deacons in what seemed to me then a heartless way waited on me and told me that they thought my usefulness in that field was done and requested me to resign. I told them that the Lord had called me there and that I would never be driven away by a pack of cowardly, sneaking deacons, who thought a good deal more of serving themselves than they did the Lord.

## The Church at Libertyville

Oh, how vividly I recall it! I worked on a few weeks and then they declared the pulpit vacant and shut me out. I had lost all faith in men and now I lost faith in God, and railed against him and vowed that I would never be guilty of preaching again. My wife and little boy went home to her folks and I tried to find work. It makes me shudder to think of those days. Then I fell sick and lay in the hospital for weeks. My wife came and cared for me with great tenderness till I was able to go home with her to the dear old farm on the shore of a beautiful lake. Then came weeks of rest, sweet, calm, soothing rest, through those long, beautiful June days. I got where I could row on the lake and wander through the woods, wife was frequently with me, and somehow life began to take on a new meaning.

"I shall never forget that day when wife had been sitting near me in a beautiful spot in the orchard and talking to me of her own rest, faith, and hope, until at last I completely melted and bowed in prayer. I had not prayed before for months. The whole hated past came before me and I saw what a miserable sinner I had been and pleaded for forgiveness. Then there

## The Pastor's Vacation

came almost like a voice from heaven, and as sweet music to my heart the words, 'Like as a father.' A blessed calm filled my soul as I repeated, 'Like as a father.' The birds sang in the trees above me and all nature seemed full of a rich refrain—'Like as a father.' I saw the gospel as I had never seen it before, and there with my wife weeping for joy, I rededicated my life to a larger, richer ministry than I had ever known before."

When the elder sat down there was a stillness in the room that was almost oppressive and many eyes were filled with tears. The moderator spoke in a subdued voice: "All who are in favor of granting a vacation to our pastor will raise the right hand." Every one raised the hand, Doctor Spear and Deacon Stearns voting with the others.

So the pastor had his vacation, with Charley Goodwill, hunting, rowing, swimming, fishing in northern Wisconsin.

His first text on his return was, "Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." It was a sermon full of gladness, thankfulness, and inspiration. Mrs. Green bowed her head and quietly wept tears of joy, and at the close of the service Deacon Stearns was

## The Church at Libertyville

one of the first to grasp his hand and exclaim: "Pastor, your vacation has done you good."

### V

#### Chiefly Concerning Mrs. Dolittle

Whatever they do, wherever they are,  
Some are always on the alert,  
To find some personal harm or slight,  
And their feelings are sure to be hurt.

**M**RS. JEREMIAH DOLITTLE was a member of the church, although it must be confessed that her membership never brought much satisfaction either to herself or to the church. Her husband, who was also a member, had never, in her estimation, received proper recognition. She remained away from the church six months at one time because her husband was defeated by a rival candidate for deacon.

Mr. Dolittle was a mild, subdued, inoffensive man, who seemed to have but one all-absorbing ambition, and that was to agree in everything with his wife.

Deacon Perkins once said to me: "I

## Chiefly Concerning Mrs. Dolittle

have no kind of patience with such a dummy for a man," but I replied: "Brother Perkins, you must remember that Brother Dolittle has a harder lot than some others."

Mrs. Dolittle was frequently annoyed with her husband for not standing up more for what she thought were his rights. She would say to him: "Jeremiah Dolittle, if you had the spunk of a mouse you wouldn't let folks run over you as you do." And he would meekly reply: "Yes, my dear; I know you are right, and I will try to do better."

One day in the public school, where little Dorothy Dolittle, their youngest child, was attending, the teacher was explaining to the children the different orders of animals, and in describing the highest class, said: "Vertebrates have backbones," and then added by way of illustration: "Men are vertebrates."

Little Dorothy's hand went up. "What is it, my dear?" asked the teacher.

"My ma says my pa hasn't got any backbone," was the very unexpected reply.

The people generally agreed with this verdict of Mrs. Dolittle respecting her husband, but many were disposed to blame her for his unfortunate deficiency. Her

## The Church at Libertyville

feelings were often seriously hurt because of the treatment which her children received. She thought no one understood or appreciated them. I have noticed that to be quite common with spoiled children.

In speaking to Mrs. Smith of her boy, Tom, she said: "Thomas is an exceptionally bright and well-behaved boy. I am really very proud of him, and greatly regret that he cannot have better advantages and associates than can be found in Libertyville. I often am sorry that we ever came to this wretched place to live."

Mrs. Smith, whose boy was in the same class in school with Tom, replied: "I understand he failed in his last examination and cannot go into the next grade."

"Failed!" exclaimed Mrs. Dolittle. "That was due entirely to an incompetent and prejudiced teacher, and the conduct of some children who get no training at home." This she said with a significant look at Mrs. Smith. "But," she went on, "I have seen the teacher and told her some things she will remember, and have laid the case before the Board of Education, and have given them to understand that there will be serious trouble if this matter is not fixed up, and they have promised to see what can be

## Chiefly Concerning Mrs. Dolittle

done about it." I never heard how it came out.

Deacon Stearns said to me one day: "I am confident that little reprobate, Tom Dolittle, is headed straight for the penitentiary," and the tone in which he said it, and the look on his face, indicated that he wished he was already there. The trouble was he had caught the boy in his orchard, helping himself to apples. It ought to be said here, in passing, that there was a condition of perpetual warfare between Deacon Stearns and the boys of the community. It must be confessed that the deacon was not characterized by that geniality and large-hearted generosity which boys like. But I referred to Tom in order to tell of a little trouble which arose in the Sunday-school.

It so happened that he was in Mrs. Sharp's class. One day Tom was restless, in fact, he had not known anything about his lesson for several Sundays, and had caused considerable trouble, so Mrs. Sharp told my wife. Finally Mrs. Sharp lost her patience and said: "Tom Dolittle, stop your whispering this instant, and behave yourself. I've had trouble enough with you. If you never know anything about the lesson yourself, you are not going to be allowed to

## The Church at Libertyville

spoil the class for those whose parents do teach them something." Unfortunately, Mrs. Sharp did not speak very low, and several of us heard what she said. Mrs. Dolittle was one. Immediately she arose and crossed over to Mrs. Sharp's class, and not deigning to notice her, she said: "Thomas, come with me; this is no place for us," and she led him from the room, and Mr. Dolittle arose and followed.

The next Sunday Mrs. Dolittle and Tom were at the Presbyterian church. Mrs. Sharp declared that Mr. Dolittle was sent back to the Baptist church to report the effect of her departure. But as I have said before, Mrs. Sharp was not always charitable in her judgments. This going to the Presbyterian church continued about six weeks, as I remember it, and then something happened which led Mrs. Dolittle to have ever afterward a peculiar hostility to that church.

Mr. Chase, the superintendent of that school, told me that Tom Dolittle was placed in a class of boys not far from Elder Hardy's Bible class, and that the boy, seeming to think he was a hero, with a bad reputation to maintain, made a good deal of disturbance, until at the close of school

### Chiefly Concerning Mrs. Dolittle

one day he overheard the elder say to Mrs. Dolittle: "Madam, I have a profound conviction that your son is a foreordained reprobate; and furthermore, I think that people who cannot get along with their own church ought not to run around and make trouble for other churches."

"Well," she snapped, "I believe you are a foreordained hypocrite, and we will trouble neither you nor your church any more." She came back to our school the next Sunday and put Tom in another class.

Anna, her eldest daughter, was not particularly prepossessing, and like her father, was somewhat subdued and retiring. At one time the Misses LaFord gave a party and did not invite Miss Dolittle. Her mother's feelings were deeply hurt, and she at once sent for the pastor and he told me that she wept in his presence. "I shall never feel like entering the church again," she declared. "To think of all I have done for the LaFords and then to be publicly insulted by them, just because they have a little more money than we have and can give a little more to the church." She then gave the pastor the family history of the LaFords and of the Dolittles, greatly to the advantage of the latter.

## The Church at Libertyville

"Oh," said the pastor, "I am sure you are mistaken, and that no slight was intended. It was simply a neighborhood affair. I know that Grace Smith and Maud Perkins were not invited." But his attempt at pacification did no good. "I see you are like all the rest," she said, "you stand up for the LaFords, no matter how mean they have been to me. I cut no figure anyhow, and might as well be out of the church."

I would like to say right here that my experience and observation lead me to believe that many pastors, especially young pastors, waste a great deal of time and energy and have a vast amount of unnecessary anxiety and trouble trying to help these over-sensitive people. I recall the case of young Brother Goodman, over at Bragville. He was actually driven out of the ministry by two families of this character in his church. He went to work to fix up all the grievances of fifteen years. He simply encouraged them in their meanness, and magnified and aggravated their troubles, till the church was almost broken up and he came to Libertyville and went into life insurance. There are, in my humble judgment, a lot of petty differences in a church that a pastor should pay no attention to whatever.

## Chiefly Concerning Mrs. Dolittle

But I must tell of Mrs. Dolittle's trouble in the choir. She thought she could sing, but her friends did not to any extent share this opinion. Rev. James Brown boasted that he had no ear for "operatic music." Miss Wagner, who had studied abroad, declared: "I don't think he has an ear for any kind of music." He further insisted that he had no use for "quartet choirs." So when he became our pastor he at once proposed to re-organize the music and have a chorus choir. It was not a wise move on his part. He was entertained at the home of Mrs. Dolittle while he was candidating. This was due to the fact that if the committee did not send the visiting ministers to her home she thought she was slighted, especially if they were persons of any prominence. While in her home Brother Brown became greatly impressed with Mrs. Dolittle's musical ability and said to me: "Deacon Bradley, I have discovered rare and neglected musical gifts in Mrs. Dolittle. I shall give her a prominent place in my new choir."

"The organizing of a choir," I replied, "is a matter of great importance, and as it is much easier to get people in than it is to get them out, I counsel you to proceed with

## The Church at Libertyville

moderation." I did not feel warranted in speaking any more definitely, but I had forebodings of evil.

The choir was speedily organized with Mrs. Dolittle as one of the leading sopranos. Had she been the leading soprano instead of one of them, the singing might have suffered, but I think the chances for trouble would have been less.

The third Sunday Mrs. Dolittle was absent, and her husband, who seemed anxious to talk, told the pastor and several others that she was not ill, but that she had her reasons for not coming.

Brother Brown hastened to call in the afternoon; she met him, with an injured look, and explained: "It might as well be understood from the start that I will never play second fiddle to Maria Jenks. Her voice isn't as musical as a cat's; she doesn't know a flat from a sharp, and last night at the rehearsal they gave her the solo to sing. I know enough to know when I am snubbed. I was the main one in getting up this choir, and I am going to be properly recognized in it or I'll just quit."

"Of course, of course," said the pastor, "everybody knows that Sister Jenks' voice does not compare with yours. We cannot

## Chiefly Concerning Mrs. Dolittle

get along without you, and I will see that the matter is made right."

Mrs. Dolittle was soon mollified, but within an hour after the pastor had gone Miss Maria Jenks knew what the pastor had said about her voice, and vowed she would never darken the door of that church again while he was pastor, which vow she sacredly kept. But this was simply the beginning of trouble, and the end was not reached until the pastor had gone, the chorus choir been broken up, and Mrs. Dolittle put into such a state of mind that she would not speak to more than half a dozen members of the church. Charley Goodwill still refers to that time as "The War of 1890."

Mrs. Dolittle had trouble in the woman's society, and so she did her missionary work in her own way and sent her contributions direct to headquarters. She joined the society when it was first organized, but was never appreciated. She could not give as much as some, and was sure that was the reason she was never elected to any office, or made chairman of any committee. Her feelings were frequently hurt, until at length the climax came in this way: During one of the regular meetings of the society she arose and said: "I am greatly in-

## The Church at Libertyville

terested in the neglected and abused Indians. I have been reading much about them of late, and I would be willing to prepare a paper for our next meeting on the Kiowas."

It was learned afterward that her husband's sister from out West somewhere was expecting to be in Libertyville at the time of the next meeting.

Mrs. Sweet, Elder Heartwell's daughter, who was president of the society at that time, fearful of hurting Mrs. Dolittle's feelings, replied in her kindest manner: "The programme for our next meeting is to be on foreign missions, and we are to study the work among the Karens. I fear a paper on the Kiowa Indians would hardly be suited to the occasion; but I am sure the programme committee will be very happy to have Sister Dolittle's paper at the following meeting."

"Very well," replied Mrs. Dolittle, "if this society is not ready to do missionary work where it is most needed, and cares nothing for the heathen at our own doors, and does not want my paper, perhaps you do not want me or my money, and I will do now what I have often thought of doing. I offer my resignation as a member of this society, and desire to say in doing

### Chiefly Concerning Mrs. Dolittle

so that I do not believe an angel from heaven would be appreciated by you here."

"I don't see what our sister's reference to an angel has to do with the case," was Mrs. Sharp's prompt response, and then said: "I move that Mrs. Dolittle's resignation be accepted."

The motion was seconded and carried without debate. Mrs. Bradley told me: "The ladies had all become so tired of her, and she had interfered so much with their work, that they felt she and the society would both be better off if she were not a member."

None of Mrs. Dolittle's children were members of the church. In fact, they seemed to dislike the church, and to have a decided preference for other denominations.

"I don't understand why it is," she said to Mrs. Paxton, "that a woman who has been so faithful to the church as I have been, and who has borne and forgiven so much, should have children who care so little for the church."

"It is indeed a mysterious dispensation of Providence," responded Mrs. Paxton.

Mrs. Dolittle went on: "If the church had treated me half-way decently, and had

## The Church at Libertyville

shown some slight appreciation of all I have done, things would have been very different. I have frequently talked this all over with my dear children." (She always spoke of her children, seeming to lose sight of Mr. Dolittle's position in the family.) "They feel very keenly the way their mother has been treated, and I honor them "but—"

"Certainly, certainly," Mrs. Paxton said, "but—"

"I have done my best, however," Mrs. Dolittle interrupted, "and no one can say that I have not been a faithful mother, but some of the members of that church will have a good deal to answer for in the day of judgment for turning my loved ones away from the church."

But I fear I have said too much about Mrs. Dolittle. She was a woman of some excellent qualities. She was always ready to help care for the sick and was very kind to the destitute. But she was so self-conscious, so blind to her own faults, and so jealous of her "rights" that she constantly made herself and those about her unhappy. If she could only have seen herself as others saw her and been as earnest in self-correction as she was in denouncing

## Judge Straight and Some Others

others, she might have been as useful as she thought she was.

## VI

### Judge Straight and Some Others

Some always speak with an even tone,  
They have no ups and downs;  
Their moderation is always known,  
And few are their smiles or frowns.

 HAVE been thinking to-day of Judge Straight, and several incidents in which he figured have come to my mind. I recall the evening when Mrs. Poor united with the church. She must have been past fifty years of age, a woman with a remarkably changeable face; animation and depression, hope and fear were constantly struggling with each other for expression.

There had been some division of opinion among the deacons as to whether or not she should be recommended for membership. Deacon Stearns thought her views on "falling from grace" were unsound and was unwilling to have her come into the church. But the others were all in favor

## The Church at Libertyville

of recommending her, and so she came before the church on the evening of which I am speaking. Her testimony was somewhat rambling and indefinite, and I must confess, quite unsatisfactory.

I saw Judge Straight, while she was speaking, deliberately take off his spectacles and wipe them and carefully replace them, and then closely study the shifting expression on Mrs. Poor's face, until she was through speaking.

He then said: "Madam, how long do I understand that you have been a Christian?"

"I have been a Christian, off and on, ever since I was twenty years of age," was her honest if not conventional reply.

"That is the trouble!" exclaimed Deacon Stearns, springing to his feet and interrupting Judge Straight, who was about to speak. "She has been a Methodist and has fallen from grace so often that she has no business in a church where she cannot have that privilege."

"Perhaps, deacon," said Judge Straight, "she ought to have the privilege taken away from her." Then turning to Mrs. Poor, he added: "I have no doubt of your sincerity and shall vote for your reception into the

### Judge Straight and Some Others

church, but there ought to be no 'off and on' in the Christian life, and I urge you to let your life hereafter be regulated by duty rather than by emotion."

"I will do the best I can," was her reply, and she did, though her Christian life was always somewhat variable.

Judge Straight was a man of marked integrity and was highly respected by all. He was dignified and formal and many thought him cold and unsympathetic; and yet scores of poor people could tell of his acts of kindness and generosity. But he himself never referred to these things. He was not given to handshaking, and was far from a success when he did undertake it.

I heard Charley Goodwill say to him one Sunday: "Judge, you ought to go to the Salvation Army for a while, and take a course of instruction in handshaking."

The judge smiled and replied: "I wish I could shake hands as you do, but I fear I can never learn."

I remember that George Bane, a young fellow who had joined the church, came to me one day, saying: "I don't think I will go to church any more. The members won't speak to me on the street, and if I am not

## The Church at Libertyville

good enough to be recognized outside of the church building I'll stay away."

George was a good fellow, but came from a poor family, and was very sensitive.

"Why, George," I said, shaking his hand cordially, "What is the matter now? Who has been slighting you?"

"I've met Judge Straight three times this week face to face on the street, and spoke to him twice, and he has refused to speak to me every time. If you call that religion I don't want any of it. I don't have to go where people won't speak to me."

It took me nearly an hour to convince George that he was mistaken and that the judge had not seen him at all, and I don't know that I would have succeeded then had not Charley Goodwill happened along and helped me.

Chancing to meet the judge the next day I said to him: "Judge, have you seen George Bane this week?"

"No," he replied, "I have not happened to meet him anywhere. Why do you ask?"

I then explained to him, and with a depth of feeling which he rarely manifested he said, "I am very sorry, Brother Bradley, and I will try to be more careful. We must be considerate for such young men."

## Judge Straight and Some Others

Not long after the judge had been elected a member of the Board of Trustees he greatly offended the treasurer, Mr. C. E. Banks. It came about in this way: The annual meeting was approaching and the trustees were going through the routine business in preparation for it.

Finally Judge Straight said: "Mr. Chairman, I move that Mr. Allan and Mr. Blake be appointed a committee to audit the treasurer's accounts."

Scarcely able to restrain the intense excitement into which this motion threw him, Mr. Banks exclaimed: "I have been treasurer of this church for ten years, and this is the first time my honesty has ever been questioned. If the time has come when you are unwilling any longer to trust me I will resign, and you can find some one who you think will not steal the church funds!"

Mr. Banks was an excellent man and a good church treasurer, but was very excitable.

The judge replied very calmly: "It never occurred to me that it was not the custom of this church to have an auditing committee, nor have I ever for a moment entertained any question whatever respecting the entire honesty of our treasurer, but no

## The Church at Libertyville

reputable business concern ever thinks of dispensing with the careful auditing of its accounts. It is a safeguard against mistakes which any man is liable to make, and promotes business methods."

"There is a difference between a church and a business concern," replied Mr. Banks, "and if we cannot trust each other in the church, we had better give up our religion."

"I for one," said Mr. Blake, "am in favor of having a little more business in our religion; not that we will have any more confidence in each other, but the world will have a little more confidence in us. I am in favor of Judge Straight's motion." After some further discussion Mr. Banks was pacified and the committee was appointed.

It was about this time that Rev. David Murray became our pastor. He was a man of good ability and great spiritual earnestness, but seemed to lack certain practical elements of character which seem to me to be essential to the largest success in the ministry. He insisted that he should receive no stated salary, but that he be given what was left from the regular collections after all expenses had been paid. This went on

## Judge Straight and Some Others

for some time until one day Mrs. Sharp and Mrs. Bradley were calling on the pastor's wife.

"How is it," inquired Mrs. Sharp, in the course of the conversation, "that James has quit school?"

Tears came to Mrs. Murray's eyes as she replied: "He has had to go to work to help support the family."

"Has it come to this?" exclaimed Mrs. Sharp, "that the First Baptist Church of Libertyville can't take care of its pastor and family?"

Then Mrs. Murray said: "I just can't keep still any longer. I want to be good and trust God, and all that, but I am utterly sick of David's no-salary idea. I have saved and scrimped beyond all reason, and almost beyond all endurance, and matters are getting worse all the time, and I sometimes wonder if the church would care if we all starved to death. I may be awful wicked, but I don't believe it is God's plan to cultivate the stinginess of his church, and I have greatly troubled David by telling him so. I know I ought not to talk in this way, but I just can't help it." And then she gave way to tears and sobs.

"Of course you can't, my dear, and you

## The Church at Libertyville

ought not to; you have kept still too long," said Mrs. Sharp. "It is a downright shame to think how thoughtless we have all been; I'll go to the trustees myself and I will tell them a few things."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Mrs. Murray, reaching out her hands in pleading protest; "you must not do that; David would never forgive me. You must not do a thing because of what I have said. If the church will not do anything without my stirring them up, nothing must be done. Can't they see and know without my telling them?"

That week was the time for the meeting of the advisory committee, which in our church was made up of all the officers and several others specially selected.

When the treasurer read his report it was very brief, and as there was no deficit, no one paid much attention to it.

The chairman was about to call for the next item of business when Judge Straight spoke: "It has been nearly a year now since we discontinued a stated salary to our pastor. I disapproved of that measure at that time and have had no occasion to change my mind since. I would like to have the treasurer state again how much the pastor received during the past month."

### Judge Straight and Some Others

“Twenty dollars and forty-eight cents,” was the reply.

Before Judge Straight could continue, Deacon Stearns spoke: “We have a pastor after my own heart. He is not forever harping about money. He is far removed from the allurements of the flesh, and is a stranger to the sordid business methods, which are so attractive to some. His plan has greatly lightened the burdens of the church. I have never before enjoyed myself so much. It is a pleasure now to listen to the treasurer’s reports, as there is never any deficit, and there is no begging for money. Why, it was only last week Brother Delaney was telling me how much he enjoyed coming to church now, since he did not have to make any pledge to the pastor’s salary. I think it would be a great mistake to go back to the old method. And then we must remember that this is the pastor’s own plan, and as long as he is satisfied I don’t see why we should do anything about it. It might hurt his feelings.”

When Deacon Stearns sat down the judge resumed: “I was about to remark,” he said, “that our present way of doing is thoroughly unbusinesslike, and I think I may add, unscriptural. The Master himself said,

## The Church at Libertyville

when he sent out his disciples, 'The laborer is worthy of his hire.' Now 'hire' is something definite. Paul, you will remember, wrote: 'They which wait at the altar, are partakers of the altar, even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.' We all know that in the olden times, those who served at the altar received a generous and definite portion for their support, and so I believe those who preach the gospel should know what they are to receive. This is to my mind both scriptural and common sense, and the two, in my judgment, never conflict."

"I believe in business, all right," said Charley Goodwill, who evidently was greatly interested, "and it looks as though the judge has got the Scripture with him too. The judge just quoted: 'They that preach the gospel shall live by the gospel.' Well, I want to say, that I happen to know that our pastor and his family are making a mighty poor living of it. Dan Murray told my Fred to-day that he had quit school and gone to work at the cannery to get something to eat. Said he had got tired living on oatmeal and beans, and that he hadn't much of an opinion of a church that was

### Judge Straight and Some Others

too stingy to pay its pastor enough to get food, saying nothing about decent clothing. And when I happened to see Mrs. Murray at the market yesterday, and quietly noted what she was buying, and saw how worn and anxious she looked, I just made up my mind that this no-salary foolery had got to stop, if I had anything to say about it. Think of a family of six living on a miserable twenty dollars and forty-eight cents a month. I don't wonder Dan is disgusted with the church. I move you, sir, that we recommend that the pastor's salary be fixed as heretofore, at one thousand five hundred dollars a year."

Judge Straight promptly seconded the motion, and all voted for it but Deacon Stearns, and he did not vote at all.

It was never known just what Charley Goodwill and Judge Straight said to the pastor when they reported this action to him, but he offered no opposition when the matter was brought before the church; and even Deacon Stearns had to admit that his sermons suffered nothing in spirituality, and many thought they gained in cheerfulness, breadth, and practical power.

Speaking of Judge Straight recalls to my mind an interesting deacons' meeting we

## The Church at Libertyville

had when the judge's son, Benjamin, applied for church-membership. He was sixteen years of age and was very much like his father. It was in midsummer, and there had been no revival meetings since the January before; in fact, church life was at rather low ebb, when he surprised the deacons by walking deliberately into their meeting and announcing in a quiet way that he would like to unite with the church.

After a few preliminary questions had been asked him, Deacon Eager said: "Benjamin, when did you pass from death into life, from darkness into his marvelous light, and have your soul flooded with an affluence of the divine glory?"

"I cannot name any definite time when I became a Christian," was the reply.

"When I became a Christian," exclaimed Deacon Eager, "I knew it. Everything was changed; the sunshine was brighter, the birds sang sweeter, and all nature was melilfluous with beauty; and the things I once loved I now hated, and what I once hated I now loved. I would like to know if our young brother has ever passed through this supernal change."

"No, I have had nothing like this. I have always believed in the gospel and am

## Judge Straight and Some Others

trying to follow Christ, and have some satisfaction in doing so. I am trusting in him for salvation, and expect to serve him as long as I live."

Deacon Stearns now cleared his throat, and peering over the tops of his spectacles at the young man, spoke: "I think Brother Eager's experience, as I have had occasion to say before, was somewhat exceptional. It is not vouchsafed to every one to pass through transfiguration experiences; but we are all miserable sinners and should all pass through the deep waters of overwhelming conviction and repentance.

"I would like, therefore, to ask our young friend if he has at any time had a crushing sense of his awful sinfulness, and a realization that he was deservedly exposed to the divine wrath, and that his everlasting condemnation would fittingly display the infinite justice and holiness of God? I well remember when all the mighty waters passed over me and I could hear, as it were, the flames of divine wrath roaring in my ears. I trust our young friend will tell us freely of his own experience in reference to these great and fundamental matters."

"I have had no experience," he replied, "such as Deacon Stearns has described. I

## The Church at Libertyville

know I have done wrong many times and have often thought that I ought to have a deeper sense of my guilt. But I don't know what more I can do. I am trying to do what I believe is right. I have asked God to forgive me and help me. I do not know how to go to work to feel worse about my sins, and so I am not worrying about it."

"I am afraid," said Deacon Stearns, "that our young friend has defective views of sin."

"Yes," added Deacon Perkins, "I am afraid that is the trouble with all of us. My idea is that the conviction for sin, which God wants, is not so much an awful experience at conversion, as an everyday experience, that will keep us from doing mean things and help us to be true and honest. That's my view of it. I didn't have any great experience of sin at my conversion, but I have had considerable since."

Charley Goodwill now got a chance to speak: "I've known Ben a long time, ever since he was a little chap, and he has been in my Sunday-school class for over a year now. He is all straight, and no play on the word, either. He may not have had any great experience. How could he? He

## Winds of Doctrine

has always been a good boy. It strikes me that past experiences ought not to count for so much as present conditions. Ben says he is trusting in Christ, and is determined to follow him. That is enough for me. I move he be recommended to the church."

The motion was carried unanimously. Deacons Stearns and Eager were good men, and after they had "borne their testimony" by referring to their own experiences they felt free to fall in with existing conditions and do what was manifestly reasonable and right.

## VII

### Winds of Doctrine

The winds of doctrine  
Diversely blow,  
And some are tossed  
Both to and fro.

AVING referred to Deacon Eager, I must tell more about him and relate some interesting incidents which come to my mind.

He was a small man, and on Sundays

## The Church at Libertyville

and other occasions, when he went out with Mrs. Eager, he wore a high silk hat, in order to make the difference between his height and that of his wife, who was very tall, less conspicuous. His early education had been somewhat neglected, and he sometimes became a little confused in the use of words.

I remember one evening at prayer-meeting we were having rather a dull time; only a few had taken part, notwithstanding the urgent appeals of the pastor and a pointed talk on duty by Deacon Stearns. The long pause which followed Deacon Stearns' remarks was becoming painful, when Deacon Eager led in prayer and in his earnest petitions for the church, he exclaimed: "O Lord, give thy servants the spirit of testification!"

One day I met Deacon Eager on the street and he stopped me and said: "Brother Bradley, I want you to be sure to be at the deacons' meeting to-night, as I have a matter of great importance to propose." I assured him that I would be there, and went on, wondering what new "wind of doctrine" had struck him now.

The meeting convened at the usual time, and as soon as there was opportunity,

## Winds of Doctrine

Deacon Eager arose and said: "I have something of virile importance which I wish to lay before the deacons in order that they may recommend it to the church. While I was at the Association I was entertained at the same place with Rev. John Briggs, of Yorktown. He is a young man of most extictional gifts. He is going to have incorporated in his church a beautiful service of infant dedication. He proposes to have all the infants of two years old and under brought to the church on Children's Day and then hold a dedicationary service. I am in favor of such a service everywhere. It will put an end to infant baptism, Brother Briggs thinks, and do lots of good in diverse ways. Hence I propound the following resolution: '*Resolved*, that, we the deacons of the First Baptist Church of Libertyville, do hereby recommend that on the coming Children's Day there be held a formidable service of infant consecration; and that we do expect all parents of our church and congregation to bring their infant children to this service, and that we do thereby confute all infant sprinkling and give to young children their rightful relationship to the church.'"

He was about to proceed in defense of

## The Church at Libertyville

his resolution when Deacon Stearns, who had with difficulty restrained himself during the reading of the resolution, exclaimed: "I am decidedly opposed to this whole business. What does that young heretical upstart at Yorktown know about Baptist usage? If he had a Baptist wife it would be a good deal better for him and for the church. It was Solomon's heathen wives that got him into trouble. I have been a Baptist for more than forty years, and have sat under the ministry of some of the greatest men of our denomination and never heard anything of this before. It is a step toward popery. It is an attempt to bring the church into the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity."

"I'd like to know," interrupted Deacon Eager, "where the gall of iniquity is in bringing an immaculate babe to the house of God and praying that the parents may bring it up in the culture and adoration of the Lord."

"I have often felt," said Charley Goodwill, "that there ought to be a service held like this, Brother Eager refers to. In Old Testament times they brought their babes to the temple, and we know Jesus took little children in his arms and blessed them. It

## Winds of Doctrine

is possible that in our opposition to infant baptism we have gone to the other extreme."

"It would, in my judgment, be a very dangerous experiment," interposed Doctor Spear. "Very soon some one would want godfathers and godmothers, and then the name would be given at the time of consecration, and soon some one would want a little water used, just to add dignity to the occasion, and thus the church would go clear over into the camp of the enemy. These are evil days when Satan comes clothed like an angel of light to deceive, if possible, the very elect. This looks to me like a covert attempt to put 'the mark of the beast' upon our beloved denomination."

Deacon Smith now spoke: "I do not share the feeling of Doctor Spear in this matter, nor am I prepared to favor Deacon Eager's resolution. I do not see any great good to come from a formal church service for the dedication of infants. There is always a danger of attaching undue importance to such forms. There was very little of the formal in Christ's blessing the little children. I do feel, however, that a simple service in the home where there is a young babe might be made very helpful."

"What is the harm of having it in

## The Church at Libertyville

the church?" exclaimed Deacon Eager. "What is the use of having a church? We have socials and lectures and weddings and funerals in the church. Why not devote our infants in the church? I would like to know. There is such a thing as being too much afraid of forms. I notice that the most of our people are so adverse to forms that they will not bow their heads during prayer. I think a few more forms in the church would be a wholesome renovation." I confess that I felt a good deal of sympathy for Deacon Eager, but I said nothing and he went on: "But I see you are not ready to adopt my resolution, and I hereby withdraw it." And so the matter was dropped.

One summer a tent was pitched not far from our church, and in large letters the passers-by read: "Holiness Unto the Lord! The Real Thing Come and be Sanctified, Body, Soul, and Spirit!"

As I was going by the tent one evening I saw Deacon Eager near the door, passing out hand-bills. He saw me, and grasping my hand with great fervor, exclaimed: "O Brother Bradley, come in! The Lord has done wonderful things for me, whereof

## Winds of Doctrine

I am glad. I am entirely, wholly sanctified. I never knew the gospel before. I have a great pacification, which I can't describe."

But I had an important engagement downtown, and left the deacon earnestly exhorting the next passer-by to come in.

At the next prayer-meeting of the church Deacon Eager was present on the front seat, with a new limp-covered Bible under his arm, and with a peculiar expression of mingled serenity and conceit on his face. He joined in the opening hymns with much fervor, closing his eyes, and swaying his body in a kind of rhythmic accompaniment to the music. I noticed his wife nudge him one or twice with her elbow, but this caused only a slight interruption of his on-coming ecstasy.

After a few prayers and the pastor's remarks, the meeting was "thrown open."

Deacon Eager at once sprang to his feet, stepped out in front, facing the audience, and in a high-pitched voice, with violent gesticulations and frequent tears, spoke for nearly half an hour. No one knows how much longer he would have spoken had not the pastor stepped to his side and quietly said something to him which led him to take his seat.

## The Church at Libertyville

I shall not attempt to reproduce that speech. It was a most remarkable torrent of platitudes, exhortations, and personal experiences. He said that he was entirely healed of "rheumatiz," that all love of sin had been taken away, and that all his "articulations to the world were fully extradited"; that churches were filled with "the corruscations of worldliness," and that the ministers, full of the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, were preaching "a deflective gospel for filthy lucre and for itching ears." He felt that he was "embalmed in an affluence of glory," and exhorted the church to come out from under the yoke of bondage to man-made creeds and ceremonies, into the "cerulean fellowship of the wholly sanctified."

I never expect to hear such an address again. The meeting would have been utterly spoiled if Aunt Dorcas had not followed in her gentle and winsome way and told us of a poor, discouraged mother whom she had met that day and helped to find the blessings and comforts of a Saviour's love.

Everybody felt that Aunt Dorcas had the true kind of holiness, although she said nothing about it.

## Winds of Doctrine

But we were not through with Deacon Eager. At the next deacons' meeting he said he would like to present a resolution which he would lay before the church when it had received the approval of the deacons. He stated further that he and Mr. and Mrs. Small and Miss Deborah Strong had been attending the holiness church, but were unwilling to leave the dear, old First Baptist Church, and would not do so if his resolutions were adopted.

Mr. and Mrs. Small had been members of the church only about a year; they had come to us from the Methodists, and formerly had belonged to the United Brethren. They were good people, but were somewhat changeable.

Miss Strong was a maiden lady who was rather peculiar. It was said that she had been disappointed in her early life and had become soured. I do not know about the disappointment, but the other was quite manifest, both in her face and in her conduct. She thought she had a call to preach, and because she was not encouraged in this by our church, she had been working with the Salvation Army for some time; but the captain had told me only a short time before that her preaching was so harsh and

## The Church at Libertyville

uncharitable that they had decided not to let her preach any more for them.

Deacon Stearns had brought her case before the deacons several times, urging that some action be taken to prevent her from disgracing the church and bringing reproach upon the gospel. He admitted that she was sound in the faith and presented the old gospel of law and judgment with great power, but his objection was based upon the fact that she was a woman, and women should keep silence in the churches.

“But,” said Charley Goodwill, “that says nothing about their keeping silence on the streets.”

“Charles Goodwill,” replied the deacon, “I am surprised that you should make light of the Bible.”

But I must come back to Deacon Eager’s resolution. He arose and with an air of great self-satisfaction read the following:

*Resolved*, that we, the members of the First Baptist Church of Libertyville, in meeting formerly assembled, do hereby declare that we are full of pride and hypocriticalism and given over to worldliness and sin; and that we believe that by a single action of faith, we may be healed of all diseases and be wholly sanctified, body, soul, and spirit; and further, we hereby promise to put

## Winds of Doctrine

away from us, as far as the east is from the west, as empty bubbles of sin, all ribbons, jewelry, feathers, and all vainness of apparel, and that we will earnestly contend with each other for the real burning-bush holiness.

When he had taken his seat, Deacon Smith said: "I have noticed there is plenty of 'contending with each other,' wherever this holiness idea goes. I understand there are already about fourteen different kinds of perfect holiness."

Then Charley Goodwill, with a significant smile lighting up his face, said: "Deacon, while you are speaking about jewelry, ribbons, and the like, how would it do to put in silk hats and hair-oil?"

The deacon looked at his hat, stroked his thin, shiny hair, but made no reply. Evidently he was taking the whole matter very seriously.

Deacon Stearns moved uneasily in his seat, and finally spoke: "I agree with what the resolution states about hypocrisy and worldliness in the churches, but I think it would be unwise to pass such a resolution. The better way will be for Brother Eager to remain with us, and as opportunity may offer, bear his testimony against the sins of the people."

## The Church at Libertyville

“I am decidedly opposed to this whole business,” interposed Deacon Perkins. “The members of the First Baptist Church are not half so full of pride and hypocrisy as those people are who make a disgusting parade of their professed holiness and have to be labeled ‘sanctified’ or no one would ever suspect that they had anything of the kind. The facts are, this so-called holiness stirs up strife, fills a person with conceit and self-righteousness, splits churches, makes intolerable cranks and fanatics out of emotional people, renders them disagreeable at home, makes men censorious, uncharitable, and unsympathetic, and is in every way utterly foreign to the spirit of the gospel.”

“Amen!” said Deacon Smith, as Deacon Perkins resumed his seat.

“Well! Well!” exclaimed Deacon Eager. “If I am a conceited hypocrite, an untolerable crank, a divisor of the church and a hypothetical fanatic, it is certainly time for me to get out and go where I am wanted.”

“No!” replied Deacon Perkins. “We do not want you to leave the church. You are too good a man to be led away by this delusion. We want you to see the danger and give up all this foolishness.”

### **The Finance Committee**

But the outcome was that Deacon Eager, Mr. and Mrs. Small, and Miss Deborah Strong all went to the holiness church.

Within a year Mr. and Mrs. Small joined the Seventh Day Adventists, Miss Deborah Strong started a new kind of holiness, and Brother Eager, in deep penitence and humility, was restored to the fellowship of the old church.

But when I visited Libertyville last summer they told me that he was meeting with the Christian Scientists, and had found a new healing for his "rheumatiz" and another blessed "pacification" for his soul.

## VIII

### **The Finance Committee**

Some are free, and delight to give,  
While some are really too stingy to live;  
Some rejoice in the collection plate,  
An object to others of perfect hate.

 OR some years I was church treasurer and member of the finance committee. The other members of the committee were Judge Straight, Charley Goodwill, John Driver, and Jeremiah Payne.

## The Church at Libertyville

It was a good committee, with differences enough in the character of its members to insure the consideration of all sides of the questions coming before us.

Judge Straight stood for systematic business methods. Charley Goodwill was generous, impulsive, and charitable in all his work. John Driver was always in favor of severe measures. He had no patience with penuriousness or any disposition to shirk responsibility. To use his frequently employed expression, he believed in "jerking 'em right up."

Poor Jeremiah Payne never saw anything hopeful. To him the church was always on the verge of bankruptcy and the members hopelessly derelict in the matter of giving. He was not a success either in securing pledges or in collecting money.

There comes to my mind now a meeting which we held to consider ways and means for raising money to enlarge and refurnish our church building. The time had come when something must be done. The building had no suitable arrangements for Sunday-school or for social gatherings and was much out of repair.

Mrs. Sharp declared: "Those old pews could not have been more uncomfortable

## The Finance Committee

if they had been made as a contrivance to help the ancient monks to do penance."

For four consecutive years the matter had been up at the annual meeting and had been freely discussed and finally postponed on account of the prevailing hard times. Jeremiah Payne had said at each meeting that he saw no indications that times would ever be any better; and Charley Goodwill, I remember, remarked at one meeting, "Times seem a good deal harder in a church meeting than they do in a meeting of the Commercial Club." Well, the matter went on, until Brother Murray resigned and went away almost heartbroken. He was a good man and a spiritual preacher, but he was not aggressive enough in practical ways. I think if he had led off in a decided and clearly defined plan, the building would have been repaired. But he was a good man, and I must not criticize him, and I must confess that the amount of discouraging talk indulged in at our meetings was enough to dishearten almost any one.

Well, after Brother Murray had gone and we had heard a number of candidates, we were greatly taken with Rev. John Paul Smith. I recall some of the remarks made about him in the meeting in which he was

## The Church at Libertyville

called. Judge Straight said: "I am very favorably disposed toward Mr. Smith. He impresses me as a man well endowed with a thorough business capacity." Deacon Stearns spoke: "I do not care so much about his business ability, but if he possesses the spiritual insight, doctrinal soundness, and unselfishness of our beloved Brother Murray, I shall be satisfied. I fear, however, that he does not; in fact, I doubt if we ever find another man possessing such rare gifts as our late pastor. While I feel that Mr. Smith's sermons lack a little in the real evangelical, doctrinal, and spiritual ring, still I shall not oppose him."

When he sat down Charley Goodwill said: "When a man marries a second wife, it is not a good plan for him to be comparing her with his first wife, especially if his first wife was all right. I like Brother Murray, but for one, I am not going to set him up as a standard for Brother Smith. The men are very different, and I think that is a good thing. I believe Brother Smith is just the man for us. He is strong with the young folks. He is a good preacher, and I suspect that he will give us just the all-around stirring up that we need."

## The Finance Committee

But I will not attempt to tell all that was said. The outcome was that a unanimous call was given him, and the church eagerly waited for his reply. It came, and was characteristic of the man, brief and to the point. It read:

DEAR BRETHREN: I greatly appreciate the promptness and unanimity of your call. I trust it is of the Lord. I see in Libertyville an excellent opportunity to do work for the Master. I accept your call on condition that you agree to raise at once \$10,000 to enlarge and refurnish the church building. Kindly let me hear as soon as practicable what you decide.

Yours for service,  
J. P. SMITH.

When the condition, ten thousand dollars, was read, I heard a groan from Jeremiah Payne, who sat near me, and Deacon Stearns actually turned pale. But scarcely had any one had time to realize what had taken place when Judge Straight arose and said: "I like the business tone of that letter. I am heartily in favor of the acceptance of the condition, and will give one thousand dollars if the entire amount is raised."

"I can't give as much as the judge," Charley Goodwill said, "but you can put

## The Church at Libertyville

me down for five hundred dollars," and with a twinkle in his eye he added, "I think times are improving."

Without any difficulty the sum of five thousand two hundred dollars was pledged right there, and the finance committee was instructed to take immediate steps to secure the remainder. The meeting to which I have alluded was the one called to take up this matter.

We had no sooner proceeded to the business of the evening than Jeremiah Payne spoke: "Brethren," he said, "I don't want to discourage you, but it never can be done; nearly everybody who can give anything pledged yesterday, and there is nobody left to get money from, and what is more, those pledges yesterday were made under undue excitement, and not half of them will ever be paid. I have been a member of the Libertyville church a good many years; I know how poor the membership is, and I know that it is simply ridiculous, in the existing hard times, for us to attempt to raise ten thousand dollars. Brother Smith might just as well have said a million, and what is more, in my judgment five hundred dollars would be ample to put our building in good shape. The old building has met

## The Finance Committee

our needs for twenty years, and I guess we can worry along awhile yet; at all events, I am sure we shall have to. I never want to discourage any one, but facts are facts, and we may as well face them."

Brother Driver at once spoke up: "There is plenty of money here if we can only get it. We have a membership of over four hundred. Twenty-five dollars from each one would settle it. Fifteen persons yesterday pledged more than half of the entire amount. It looks to me as though three hundred and eighty-five ought to be able to take care of the balance. I am in favor of jerking 'em right up and making 'em do it. We coax people altogether too much. In the lodge, if they don't pay their dues, they are thrown right out. I believe it would be better if we did the same in the church."

After Brethren Payne and Driver had relieved their minds we were ready for business, and soon matured plans which speedily resulted in securing the remainder of the money and in beginning a period of great prosperity in the church under the leadership of Rev. John Paul Smith.

There were two classes of persons in the Libertyville Church that caused the finance

## The Church at Libertyville

committee much trouble. Neither class was large, and yet the committee felt that they ought not to exist at all. One was made up of those who always pledged to everything but rarely ever paid anything on their pledges. The other was composed of those who never pledged a cent to anything, not even to current expenses. They claimed to give what they could when the collection plate was passed, but the amount of the loose collection was evidence against them.

One evening we were discussing this latter class. As treasurer, I reported that there were thirty people in the church who were well able to give who had pledged nothing to the expenses of the church, although they had been repeatedly requested to do so. All felt that something should be done. Judge Straight said: "I am in favor of looking carefully into the financial ability of these parties and of assessing each one a moderate but reasonable amount, and then let us use suitable means to induce them to agree to our assessment."

"You might just as well assess lamp-posts," Jeremiah Payne replied. "You can't get anything out of them. The reason they don't pledge anything is because they are too mean and stingy to do it. I have

## The Finance Committee

known them a long while. It is just a waste of our time to try to do anything with them, and the trouble is the number is increasing. It didn't used to be so in the church. Things are getting discouraging enough. When a few of the older members are gone I don't know what will become of the church."

John Driver now spoke: "I am in favor of jerking 'em right up. We are altogether too lenient with them. We can palaver and coax till doomsday and accomplish nothing. Paul says, 'If a man will not work, neither shall he eat,' and I say if a person will not give to the support of the church, he ought to be turned out. I have been thinking about this, and have prepared a letter which I would like to read, which I think ought to be sent to every one of these thirty reported by the treasurer. Here is the letter:

DEAR SIR: You are a member of the First Baptist Church, of Libertyville, but have pledged nothing to its support. You must understand perfectly well that you are shirking your responsibility. Please fill out and return at once the inclosed pledge card. If you fail to do this your name will be reported to the board of deacons as one deserving the discipline of the church.

Very respectfully,  
FINANCE COMMITTEE.

## The Church at Libertyville

"That is my idea of the way to bring 'em to time. I'd like to have this letter approved and sent out at once. I believe in jerking 'em right up and I think this is the way to do it."

"Charity suffereth long and is kind," said Charley Goodwill. "It seems to me the case is not so bad as Brother Driver thinks, nor so hopeless as Brother Payne regards it. As I have been glancing over the treasurer's books I see a good many names there which formerly belonged to this non-pledging list. Patience, kindness, and instruction have brought them over. Sometimes we may feel as James and John did, and want to call down fire from heaven, but that is not the gospel spirit. Jesus said that he had not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. I am very thankful that we have the number of those who have not pledged reduced to thirty, and I am confident that we can reach the most of these. I am in favor of Judge Straight's plan, with a slight modification. Let us decide what we think each one can give and then see them all personally. I am willing to see half of them myself, and tell them not that they are assessed, but that we need that amount from them."

## The Finance Committee

After some further discussion this plan was adopted and proved very effective. But perhaps I ought to add that I think the encouraging results were due, not so much to the plan as to the tact and geniality of Charley Goodwill.

At a subsequent meeting I reported upon the other class, those who pledged on every occasion but never paid, or at least paid only in part, and that very slowly and grudgingly. There were only about ten of these, but their unpaid pledges to beneficence and current expenses ran far up into the hundreds of dollars and back over many years.

Jeremiah Payne was the first to speak: "This neglect to pay obligations is one of the significant signs of the times."

Perhaps I ought to say that Brother Payne was a great student of prophecy, or at least he claimed to be, and he thought from his studies that the world and the church were both getting worse and worse, and this is what he had in mind when he spoke of "the signs of the times." Often in prayer-meeting and elsewhere he referred to "the signs," especially the bad signs. Well, he went on to say, "The commercial world is honeycombed with dishonesty.

## The Church at Libertyville

Men can't be trusted any more and now the evil is getting into the church. This, in my judgment, is simply the beginning of the manifestation of the Man of Sin, of which Paul speaks. I don't want to discourage you, but this reveals a very disheartening state of things in the church. I don't see any hope, and I confess that I see nothing that we can do."

"Nothing that we can do?" exclaimed Brother Driver. "Why not? A pledge of this kind is a legal obligation. I don't care anything about your 'signs,' but I am in favor of getting right after your 'Man of Sin' and of teaching him a thing or two. Now there is old Jim Delaney, who never paid a cent in his life for anything when he could get out of it. He is back on his pledge two hundred dollars, and it would be two or three times as much if all the old records had been preserved. He ought to be jerked right up before the courts and made to pay. There is no other way to bring him and those like him to time."

"The mystery of iniquity doth already work, and you cannot stop it by any resort to human tribunals," replied Brother Payne.

"Mystery of nonsense!" said Brother

## The Finance Committee

Driver. "There is no mystery about it, and they would soon see it if we went after them as we ought. There wouldn't be any great mystery about a judgment from the court. The only mystery to me is that the church will carry such a lot of dead-beats on its list year after year."

"I think," began Judge Straight, in his usual calm and dignified manner, "that Mr. Driver's plan is hardly to be recommended, since a judgment in the most of these cases, even if it could be secured, would be of little value; and then too, it occurs to me that Jesus did not command the course of the man in the parable, who took his debtor by the throat and said, 'Pay that thou owest.' I do not think the Lord wants his money collected in that way. We must find some means of getting at their consciences rather than their throats. I see but one course that gives any promise, and that is to ask Mr. Goodwill to see them personally, giving him large discretionary powers as to what reduction may be made in the pledges if they are paid in the near future."

This plan was approved, and we were delighted at the next meeting to find that a settlement had been made with Mr. Delaney for fifty cents on the dollar; and

## The Church at Libertyville

others from whom we had expected nothing had paid all the way from twenty-five to seventy-five per cent. of their pledges.

Brother Driver, however, protested: "They ought never to be let off in that way. It is really encouraging them in their meanness. If I had my way they would be jerked right up and made to pay every cent they owe."

But the rest of us passed a vote of thanks to Charley Goodwill for his efficient and satisfactory work.

## IX

### The Serton and Other Troubles

Heat and ventilation,  
Dust and drafts and light,  
Call for much attention,  
To keep things going right.

 TTO SCHMIDT was a good sexton. He was conscientious, punctual, trustworthy, and had almost an abnormal dislike for dirt. Mrs. Dolittle, who before sitting down always drew her hand carefully across the back of her pew to see how much dust was there, was heard

## The Sexton and Other Troubles

to remark: "Well, I am thankful the trustees have at last found a janitor who knows his business." But we did have a time of it before we got Otto Schmidt; and as we shall see, our troubles did not all end with his coming.

For two or three years Samuel Noakes had been our sexton. But poor Sam had many faults, and I suspect had some trials too. When Mr. Murray became our pastor, Sam said to him—so the pastor told me some time afterward: "I'm sorry for you. You've tackled a hard job. They're a lot of faultfinders. You'll have your hands full to get along with them." I fear Sam had not seen the best side of the members of the church. Perhaps janitors are generally unfortunate in this respect.

We used soft coal in our church furnaces at this time. One of our members was interested in the coal business, and we bought our coal of him at a reduced figure. But some thought, considering the grade of the coal, that we did not save very much. There are those, however, who are always ready to find fault. But I have referred to the coal because there seemed to be a particular affinity between coal-dust and Sam's hands and face and clothing.

## The Church at Libertyville

In one of the women's meetings Mrs. Sowerby said: "If the trustees persist in keeping Sam Noakes as janitor, I am in favor of asking them to appoint a committee to see that he is washed at least once a month. It is my humble opinion that a lot of men are not fit to look after the church building."

"Yes," added Mrs. Smith, "it might be well to ask them at the same time to plan to have the church dusted once or twice a year. Everything is getting so dirty about the building that we shall never be able to get it clean again. I met Mrs. Richards last week and asked her why they did not come to church any more, and she replied, 'We cannot afford it; it spoils too many good clothes.'"

"And it seems to me," suggested Mrs. Payne, "that something ought to be done about ventilation and heat once in a while. Jeremiah is sick with a cold half the time, just because of the drafts and the cold of this old church. A ten-year-old boy would have more sense than Sam Noakes has about opening windows and regulating the heat."

Mrs. Straight now spoke: "There is no use finding fault with the trustees. They

## The Serton and Other Troubles

have no money to hire a first-class janitor, and are compelled to do the best they can. Mr. Straight said they would be glad to secure a better one if they could afford it, but that they find it difficult to get money enough to pay Mr. Noakes."

"I should think they would," replied Mrs. Sowerby. "It is worse than wasting money to pay it for such a janitor. We would be better off with none at all."

"That brings up an idea which has been in my mind for some time," interposed Mrs. Raymond. "Over at Plainview, where my daughter Maria is a member, the women are taking care of the church building and the trustees pay them, and the money goes into the treasury of the aid society. They hire a man to look after the fires and they do all the rest. They have divided up into companies of ten each, with a captain for every company, and then take turns doing the work."

"That plan might do all right," said Mrs. Jordon, "in a little country town, but I am afraid it would not work here in Libertyville."

But most of the ladies were heartily in favor of trying it; and after a full discussion the plan was adopted, and later

## The Church at Libertyville

was, with some hesitation, approved by the trustees.

Although the ladies had unanimously voted to go into the undertaking, some difficulty was experienced in securing volunteers for the different tens. There seemed to be a marked willingness on the part of many to let others do the work. Some who heartily approved the plan said that they would be very glad to help, but they really had more on hand already than they could do. The real trouble, however, came in securing captains for the tens. But finally, several women who always bore the brunt where there were hard tasks to be done consented to serve, and the new order of things was duly inaugurated.

For a number of weeks everything seemed to work all right, although I heard Mrs. Bradley remark several times: "I am almost worn out helping to get that old church cleaned up." And Mrs. Sharp declared: "That man Noakes ought to be in the penitentiary for getting money under false pretenses while he was janitor of this church."

At one of our deacons' meetings Charley Goodwill laughingly remarked: "My wife is at the church so much these days that

## The Serton and Other Troubles

we are talking of breaking up housekeeping, so that she can have more time for her new duties."

"We are already broken up at our house," replied Deacon Smith, "and I for one will be glad when this foolishness is over. I am willing to increase my subscription to the church if Mrs. Smith can be relieved. We shall have to pay more than the salary of a good sexton in doctors' bills if this thing goes on much longer."

But soon trouble began to develop among the women. The working force in each company grew less, until a few women were doing all the work. Of course each one thought that all the others would be on hand, and she could drop out without being missed, and as other matters were pressing, the church work was neglected. At the woman's meeting, where this matter was the subject of endless discussion, Mrs. Sharp, becoming somewhat irritated, said: "I have as much respect for Sam Noakes as I have for those women who voted so promptly to go into this thing and are now shirking their duties and allowing a few to do all the work. I am in favor of throwing it all up and of telling the trustees to get Noakes again if they want to."

## The Church at Libertyville

"Well," said Mrs. Jordan, "I don't scrub my own house, and I am not going to be scrubwoman for the church."

"What made you vote for it, then?" replied Mrs. Sharp.

"I didn't vote to do it myself, but to let those do it who wanted to," was Mrs. Jordan's reply.

"It looks as though a good many did the same kind of benevolent voting," added Mrs. Sharp.

The result was that at the end of three months this plan was abandoned, and the trustees found no trouble to raise sufficient money to secure a first-class sexton, and Otto Schmidt, to whom reference has already been made, was engaged.

He was proud-spirited, quick-tempered, and resented anything that looked like ordering him around. His wife, who was a member of the church, was exceedingly sensitive, and was constantly looking for slights because she was the janitor's wife. And I must confess that I fear some of the ladies were not so careful as they might have been. His wife's feelings did not contribute at all to Otto's peace of mind.

One evening after an all-day's meeting of the women's society I dropped in at

## The Sexton and Other Troubles

the church and found him in a great state of excitement. He began at once: "Mr. Bradley, I vants to know who vas mine boss. Dese vomens makes me crazy. Von say do dis, anoder say do dat, und dey sends me evryvares, and tells me I bin hired to do everydings. Some say der house bin too cold, some say it vas too varm. Some say, 'Open die vindows'; oders say, 'Vy you do dot?' I can no haf so many tell me vot I do. Und dey tells mine wife she bin janitors too. If dot bin recht, den I goes vay."

I told him I would speak to Mr. Allan, the chairman of the trustees, and I was sure something would be done about it.

At the next meeting of the trustees Mr. Allan said: "Our sexton is greatly disturbed, and says he cannot continue to serve us unless something is done to improve matters. He complains about the juniors on Sunday afternoon. After the Sunday-school he arranges the rooms for the evening services, and then they come and romp around and get everything into disorder again. In fact, last Sunday matters were so bad before the leader came that he caught Tom Dolittle and gave him a good shaking, and now Mrs. Dolittle proposes to leave

## The Church at Libertyville

the church unless we discharge Mr. Schmidt at once. Then too, he says the young people hold their socials so late that he cannot get home till after midnight, and that they scatter paper and food all about the church parlors. But his chief complaint is against the women. They greatly worry him with all sorts of demands upon him and upon his wife; and some of them order him to do things in a way that stirs his German blood. He is a very capable sexton, and we ought not to let him go if we can help it."

Mr. Sowerby, whose home trials were generally known, said: "The janitor has my sympathy. I have enough to do to get along with one woman. I am not surprised that he has trouble trying to please so many. I should think after the experience the women have had taking care of the church they would be glad to let the whole business alone for a while."

The next to speak was Mr. Banks: "I have been much disturbed at the way the juniors have been carrying on. I took my girl out of the society some weeks ago. She was getting a good deal more harm than good. Boys and girls do not seem to have the respect for the house of God which

## The Serton and Other Troubles

they had years ago. I am profoundly thankful that the sexton gave Tom Dolittle what he deserved, and wish he had shaken several others. I am in favor of having him appointed as a special policeman and instructed to keep order in and around that building at any cost."

"It is possible," replied Mr. Allan, "that the fault is as much our own as it is that of the boys and girls, or of any one else. As trustees I fear we have not looked carefully enough after these things. The church building is for use and the various societies of the church should be encouraged to use it."

"I am in favor of their using it," interrupted Mr. Banks, "if they will use it properly. But they must not worry the life out of the janitor, and they must not make it a place for romping and midnight socials. I am in favor of not allowing any society to hold any meeting or social in the building without a written permit from the trustees."

"What I was about to propose," went on Mr. Allan, "was this: let us appoint Mr. Church as custodian of the building, with the understanding that the sexton is to look to him and to no one else for orders,

## The Church at Libertyville

and that he as custodian is to have an oversight of all the gatherings held in the building."

"Well," added Mr. Banks, "if Brother Church wants a job of that kind, I am willing. I am sure I don't want it."

Mr. Church was a firm, wide-awake, quiet, tactful man, whom everybody respected, and who was greatly interested in the welfare of the church.

He was duly appointed, and the following is an extract from his first report: "I have found my work as custodian of the church building, not so difficult as some of my friends or as I myself feared it might be. The ladies have expressed to me their satisfaction that one person has been placed in charge of the building, and with one or two unimportant exceptions, have promptly referred all matters to me. They have been specially gratified to find that the sexton does cheerfully, under my instructions, many things which he was unwilling to do before. He seems much happier in his work, and of his own accord apologized to Mr. Dolittle for his treatment of Tom.

"The juniors are coming on all right. A conference with the leader enabled us to

### Contrary Minds

adopt measures by which practically all disorder has been overcome. And so I think that, with patience and constant watchfulness all these matters are going to work out satisfactorily."

"That is encouraging," said Mr. Banks, "and I am in favor of giving Brother Church a vote of thanks."

"I deserve no vote of thanks," replied Mr. Church. "My duties are very simple and easy. If any vote of thanks is called for, let it be given to Mr. Allan for suggesting a practical plan for looking after our church building."

## X

### Contrary Minds

There are good folks who ne'er fail,  
When there's a question to decide,  
To wait and see what others do,  
Then take the other side.

 RECALL an old pastor in the place where I first joined the church, who had a somewhat significant way of putting a motion in the business meetings. After stating the question

## The Church at Libertyville

with great deliberation he would say: • “All who are in favor of this motion will raise the right hand.” Then he would add, “Now all those who have contrary minds will give the same sign.”

Deacon Jacob Black was a man with a contrary mind. Personally, I was not in favor of electing him to succeed Deacon Eager. But it was at a time when it was difficult to get persons to serve in the various offices of the church, and I learned that the nominating committee, after trying in vain every available man in the church, selected him as a last resort; and Brother Jones, who served on the committee, told me that he thought he would not have accepted the nomination if his wife had not told him that he was not fit to be a deacon, and that she was sure few in the church wanted him, and that the committee would not have come to him if they could have found any one else who would have taken it. “That settled it at once,” Brother Jones declared, “and he promptly accepted the nomination.”

Perhaps I ought not to say anything about his wife, but speaking of her reminds me that it was currently reported that she was so homely and ill-natured, as a girl,

## Contrary Minds

that nobody else seemed to want anything to do with her, and he married her just to be contrary. He seemed to be reasonably happy with her, as she furnished him abundant opportunities for the exercise of his contrariness. He was entirely independent in politics, and was always training with some insignificant party, which was opposed to pretty much everything and never elected anybody. He was bald, and his head thus exposed, was seen to slope up to a central ridge which was more or less undulating. His chin was protruding, and at the point was covered with a thin tuft of grizzly whiskers. He was not contrary from meanness, but from a natural constitutional bent. He never got angry, and often, I think, would have been disappointed if his opposition had defeated a measure.

Shortly after he became deacon the question of collection plates came up. We formerly used a collection box with a short handle, but people complained that the boxes were noisy and the handles too short. Then we got collection bags attached to long handles, resembling appliances for catching butterflies and grasshoppers. Deacon Perkins had been in Chicago on a visit, and had been noting how collections were taken

## The Church at Libertyville

there. He said, "At the church which I attended while in Chicago they used plates for their collections. These were passed from one to another the entire length of each pew, and I was greatly delighted with the order and the importance attaching to this part of the service. Somehow the taking hold of the plate seemed to make the people feel more their individual responsibility. I learned from the treasurer that the use of plates added materially to the amount of the collections. I make a motion that we recommend to the church the procuring of collection plates to be used hereafter."

Charley Goodwill immediately seconded the motion, when Deacon Black spoke up: "I do not want to oppose any measure that may seem to be for the best interests of the church, but I shall be compelled to vote against this motion. It is, in my judgment, a movement to cultivate vanity and display in giving. It is a cunningly devised scheme to enable those who give to be seen of men."

Deacon Stearns added: "There is a great deal of force in what Brother Black says. Our Lord said, 'Let not your right hand know what your left hand doeth.' I think

## Contrary Minds

the old collection bag is admirably suited to the carrying out of that command."

"Yes," said Deacon Smith, "I am reminded of what Mrs. Smith saw a Sunday or two ago. She said she did not intend to watch what other people were doing, but her attention was arrested by the conduct of a person just in front of her, and without thinking she watched him. He looked in his pocketbook for a coin small enough for the collection, but failing to find it, put his pocketbook back. He then closed his hand, as if he had something in it, and when the collection-bag came along he went through the motion of giving. Of course I know such cases are few, but any kind of a public collection is subject to abuse."

"Right there is the trouble," said Deacon Black. "I am opposed to all public collections. I am in favor of having a box in the vestibule, as they had in the old temple."

"I have always been in favor of that myself," responded Deacon Stearns.

"But you remember," added Deacon Perkins, "that when Jesus sat over against the treasury, or the old collection box, he saw how much each one gave, even to the widow's two mites. That arrangement would not help matters."

## The Church at Libertyville

“Well,” Deacon Black said, “we make altogether too much of this matter of giving; I am in favor of greatly simplifying the whole business and of putting it more in the background.”

“I have often felt the same way myself,” was Deacon Stearns’ response.

This constant agreement with him by Deacon Stearns seemed to disconcert Deacon Black, and he had nothing more to say, and when the vote was taken refused to vote, evidently fearing Deacon Stearns would vote as he did.

But we did have a time of it when the question of individual communion cups came up.

Mrs. Richards, a wealthy widow from the East, had come to make her home among us, and had entered actively (some thought a little officiously) into the work of the church. She often spoke of the fact that in the church in Boston from which she came individual communion cups were used, and she had a good deal to say about the uncleanliness of all drinking from the same cup, and also of the danger from microbes.

At one of the meetings of the women’s

## Contrary Minds

society she proposed that the women raise money and donate an individual communion set to the church.

Mrs. Blunt, who took pride in "talking right out," replied: "This society is not organized to promote Boston fads, nor as an anti-microbe institution, but to help on the missionary work of the kingdom."

Others vigorously opposed the measure, and it was dropped. Then Mrs. Richards sent a letter to the deacons, stating that she would be glad to donate an individual communion set to the church, and hoped that the deacons would approve, and report the matter favorably to the church. As secretary of the board, I read the letter. It came as a great surprise to all. Few had given the matter any thought, and I could see that the propositon was not favorably received.

Charley Goodwill was the first to speak: "I am not satisfied in my own mind that such a move is desirable. It may be all right, but I want to think over it awhile."

Deacon Perkins added: "I suppose Mrs. Richards is a good woman, but I don't quite relish her attempt to foist Eastern notions upon us. We are not wholly benighted out here in the uncultured West. I guess we can defy the microbes a little longer."

## The Church at Libertyville

By this time Deacon Black saw which way the current was going, and he spoke: "Well, brethren, I don't want to oppose you, but I am in favor of accepting this generous offer. Before I was made deacon I sat in the pew just behind old Gorman, the worst tobacco chewer I ever saw, and Mrs. Thornton, who is slowly dying of consumption, and I confess that I never enjoyed taking the cup after it had been passed to them."

"It is not a question of tobacco or consumption," said Doctor Spear, "but of the teaching of the Bible, and I for one don't believe the Lord used thimbles when he inaugurated the Holy Supper."

"We use four cups in our service," replied Deacon Black. "If it is not unscriptural to use four, why may we not use twenty-four or four hundred?"

It must be admitted that Deacon Black was a remarkably well-informed man. His very contrariness had stirred him up to investigate all kinds of subjects.

Deacon Stearns now spoke: "I wonder what will come next? These are certainly days of fads and heresies. I wonder some one does not propose that we have individual straws through which to drink the

## Contrary Minds

communion wine. They would cost less than these little, trifling cups and could be thrown away after being used. Then why does not some one suggest that the bread be put up in medicated capsules? This would certainly be more hygienic; and, of course, pretty soon some one will demand that we have sterilized rose-water for baptism. There is absolutely no limit to this kind of foolishness, and for one, it seems to me, that it is entirely out of place for new members and new deacons to undertake to disturb the peace of the church with such unscriptural and unreasonable propositions."

The situation was now becoming interesting to Brother Black, who replied: "If some churches never had any suggestions from new members and from new deacons, they could take for their motto, 'As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!' I for one am in favor of progress. The church must keep abreast of the times. Modern medical science declares that for a congregation all to drink out of the same cup is unsanitary and dangerous. The Bible is not against good health and common sense, and so I am in favor of adopting this new departure."

"I would not like to take a stand against

## The Church at Libertyville

this measure," said Charley Goodwill. "In fact, I am quite impressed with Deacon Black's arguments, but we must think about it awhile, and I move you that we thank Mrs. Richards for her generous offer, but defer action for the present."

This motion carried, and the matter was not brought up again while I was there; but when I was back last summer, and present at the communion, I was surprised to find they were using individual communion cups and Deacon Stearns was assisting in the service.

When Rev. James Brown resigned the question of suitable resolutions to be read at his farewell reception came up at our deacons' meeting.

I have already alluded to him and the trouble he got into with the choir. This was not the only trouble he had. There had been a division over him and he had been practically forced to resign. But now that he had done so and was soon to close his pastorate, it seemed wise to many, especially in view of the fact that he had some influential friends, and as custom seemed to demand such action, that resolutions of appreciation be adopted.

## Contrary Minds

So at this meeting Doctor Spear, who had been a firm supporter of the pastor, said: "It was suggested to me yesterday that I come to this meeting prepared to present for your consideration resolutions which should express our high appreciation of the work of our beloved pastor, who feels called upon to close his efficient labors among us. This I have cheerfully done, and shall be glad to present for your approval the following:

He then produced and read what he had prepared:

WHEREAS, Rev. James Brown has been, during the past eighteen months, the able, efficient, fearless, and uncompromising pastor of the First Baptist Church at Libertyville, and

WHEREAS, he has stood unflinchingly for the faith once delivered to the saints, whether men would hear or whether they would forbear, and has faithfully sought to purify the church of all formalism and worldliness, and

WHEREAS, after greatly endearing himself to the devout people of Libertyville, by his "holy walk and conversation," he sees the hand of Providence leading him to close his work amongst us,

*Be it resolved*, that his resignation has been accepted with sincere regret, that we shall greatly miss his faithful ministry among us, but will be comforted by the fact that our great loss will be the gain of some other church, and we shall expect

## The Church at Libertyville

that great success will attend his labors wherever he may go.

After reading his resolutions, Doctor Spear moved their adoption and some one seconded the motion. The vote was about to be taken, the most of the deacons regarding it as a mere form and an easy way out of a matter that had caused so much trouble, but which seemed to be rapidly approaching an amicable settlement.

Charley Goodwill, who sat next to me, said in an undertone: "Those resolutions are a little strong, and yet Brother Brown has some good points, and after all, resolutions don't amount to anything anyhow, and I guess this is the best thing to do under the circumstances."

At this juncture Deacon Black arose and said:

"Brethren, I always dislike to oppose any measure which seems to meet your approval, but I am not satisfied with these resolutions. Of course they will be published in the local papers and also in the denominational papers. Almost every week I read similar resolutions and wonder, if the dear brethren were having such remarkable pastorates, why they should quit. As every one of us knows, these resolutions

## Contrary Minds

do not—well, to say the least, do not tell the whole truth. I have prepared some myself, which I would like to read:

WHEREAS, Rev. James Brown has had a short, turbulent pastorate of a year and a half in the First Baptist Church, of Libertyville, resulting in serious division, marked loss of membership, and reproach in the community, and

WHEREAS, after repeated urging to resign, by many of the leading members of the church, and a feeling on the part of all that it would be best for him to do so, he has finally decided to close his labor and strife among us,

*Be it resolved*, first, that we are glad he is going away, and, second, that we hope his experience here has taught him wisdom and that if he should secure another pastorate, he will do better than he has in Libertyville.

He added: "I move the adoption of these resolutions instead of those presented by Doctor Spear," and greatly to my surprise, Deacon Stearns seconded the motion. I shall not attempt to reproduce the discussion which followed. It was very spirited and, I think, beneficial. The outcome was that Deacon Smith proposed the following form, which was adopted:

WHEREAS, Rev. James Brown, after being pastor for one year and a half of the First Baptist

## The Church at Libertyville

Church, of Libertyville, has decided to close his labors among us,

*Resolved*, that we hereby express our confidence in his sincerity and honesty of purpose, and, second, that we wish for him a large measure of blessing in his future labors.

Brother Brown was not satisfied with these resolutions, and they were not published in the papers.

## XI

### Contending for the Faith

They think that religion is mainly a creed,

Perfect, unchanging, which they must defend;  
Their mission in life is plainly decreed,

For the faith of the church they must always contend.

**B**ROTHER ELIHU YOUNG had been called from the theological seminary to the pastorate of the church at Millersburg, a little town a few miles up the river from Libertyville. Shortly after his coming to the field we received a letter requesting us to send our pastor and two other delegates to an ordination council to meet at Millersburg. We

## Contending for the Faith

always had more or less difficulty in finding persons who would serve as delegates on councils, and at Associations and conventions. The representative men of the church were unwilling to take the time from their business; hence, it usually came about, after several had been nominated and had positively declined, that Deacon Stearns and Doctor Spear were appointed. This was done in the present instance.

It so happened that I had a little business in Millersburg on the day of the ordination, and upon the urgent solicitation of Pastor Smith, I decided to drop into the meeting of the council. I concluded as I looked over the brethren present, that the other churches must have had trouble in securing delegates similar to that of the Libertyville church.

The council was called to order and a temporary chairman appointed, after which followed a futile effort to find the clerk of the Millersburg church, in order that he might produce and read the minutes of the meeting of the church at which the call of the council was issued. But as he could not be found it was finally decided after an extended discussion to accept the statement of one of the deacons as to the fact and the essential features of the call.

## The Church at Libertyville

Deacon Stickler, however, of Plainview, declared: "I am sure this is irregular and contrary to usage and I fear it will invalidate our Brother Young's ordination."

But the council proceeded to permanent organization, wasting, it seemed to me, a good deal of time over unimportant matters.

In one instance the pastor had been authorized by his church to appoint the other two delegates. This he had done, but Elder Spike, of Bragville, declared: "No church can delegate such authority. The appointing of messengers is a prerogative vested in the church itself, and can no more be delegated than can the finding of a verdict be delegated by a jury to some individual," and so he went on for half an hour. But when he was through the council voted to recognize the two delegates. I noticed, however, that Deacons Stearns and Stickler voted with Elder Spike.

It took some time too, to decide whether Brother Young should go right through his statement and have questions at the close or whether he should be questioned as he proceeded. The latter course was finally adopted. With all of these preliminary questions settled, the council was at last ready to proceed with the examination.

## Contending for the Faith

Brother Young was formally introduced to the council by Hon. Joshua Grafton, of Millersburg, in a somewhat pompous and effusive address, after which he proceeded to give his Christian experience.

He said: "I cannot recall a time when I was not trying to lead a Christian life. My parents were devout Christians, and the first thing my mother taught me was to pray and to endeavor to do what Jesus wanted me to do. At eleven years of age I made a public profession of my faith and united with the church." Here he paused, and the moderator said: "Does any member of the council desire to ask the candidate any questions in reference to his Christian experience?"

Elder Dryden, from Plainview, a retired minister, slowly arose, smoothed down the long wisp of hair which was carefully trained from one side to cover his bald head, cleared his throat, looked around over the council, as though burdened with a great sense of responsibility, and then said: "Mr. Moderator, I do not desire to seem to question the young brother's Christian experience, but I look back a good many years to my own conversion and to the mighty movements of the Spirit which I have seen in

## The Church at Libertyville

my ministry." (It was a well-known fact that his ministry had been a conspicuous failure, but he had forgotten it.) "I say, when I remember these things, I am not entirely satisfied with the brother's experience, and would like to ask him if there was never a time when he was profoundly convicted and saw himself a lost sinner and when he turned to God with groanings that could not be uttered?"

Here Deacon Stearns interrupted: "That is just the question I wanted to ask. What we need to-day is some old-time conversions. I shall never forget how the Lord laid hold of me with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm."

"But," interposed Rev. Dr. Wayte, pastor from Morning Side, "the brethren must remember that there is a great variety of experiences. I never passed through any of these mighty upheavals and overturnings, and yet I am sure I am a Christian. David seems to sum up his experience in a very few words when he says, 'I thought on my ways, I turned my feet unto thy testimonies, I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.' I move you that the brother proceed with his call to the ministry."

## Contending for the Faith

"If there is no objection," said the moderator, "Brother Young will proceed.

I expected there would be objection, but it seemed that Elder Dryden did not care to oppose so important a person as Doctor Wayte, and so Mr. Young went on.

Mr. Young told how, during his college course, while he was trying to decide what his life-work should be, he had had a deepening conviction that he ought to enter the ministry. At the same time several of his friends had suggested the same thing to him, and finally, after earnest prayer and a careful consideration of the work and his adaptability to it, he had concluded that the Lord wanted him to preach. He had often felt unworthy for such a service, and yet he was very desirous of going ahead.

When he had finished, Dr. Jabez Spear arose. "Mr. Moderator," he said, "I greatly hesitate to speak, and yet I have a profound conviction that there is danger to-day that men shall choose the ministry instead of having God choose them. I would like to know if our young brother has a great burden on his heart for lost souls, and if he can join with Paul in saying, 'Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.' I believe that when a man is called of God

## The Church at Libertyville

he does not take counsel of his friends, nor study his adaptability. He knows he is called. I shall never forget how like a voice from heaven I heard the call of God taking me from the vanity of the world into the high office of the gospel ministry."

"I would like to ask Brother Spear—I mean Doctor Spear," said Deacon Barker, from Plainview, "why he did not stay in the ministry if he had such a call."

"Sometimes the Lord calls a man out of the ministry as well as into it," replied the doctor.

"That's so," replied Deacon Barker, "and I wish some others would hear the call out." All knew that he was trying to get rid of his pastor.

"If there are no further remarks," replied the moderator, "the candidate will now proceed to state his views of Christian doctrine."

This he did in what seemed to be a clear and common-sense way. I, of course, cannot remember all the discussion that followed. It was all new to me, as I had never before been at such a gathering, and being a humble layman in the church, do not feel myself competent to criticize the proceedings of such experienced and learned

## Contending for the Faith

brethren as constituted this council. It did appear to me, however, that much time was wasted upon unimportant questions and upon questions which no one can answer. It also occurred to me that some of the brethren were more anxious to express their own views than they were to find out what Brother Young believed. In fact, in the discussion which arose among the members of the council he was sometimes entirely forgotten.

I recall distinctly some of the questions that were asked. Mr. Calvin Pierce, a small, sharp-faced, bristle-haired storekeeper from Marshall, who had the reputation of being a champion checker player and a great arguer upon politics and religion, said: "Mr. Moderator, I would like to ask the young brother a question."

He had a high-pitched, irritating voice, that invited opposition. He went on: "I am not entirely satisfied with the candidate's statement of the important relation existing between faith and regeneration. I wish he would be so kind as to tell us which, in his opinion, comes first, the regenerating work of the Spirit or the faith of the individual. I regard this as a matter so fundamental and far-reaching that no man

## The Church at Libertyville

is prepared to preach the gospel who does not have full assurance at this point. We must be careful not to detract from the glory of God in his sovereign electing grace by putting faith, the work of man, before the beginning of the new life in the soul. Faith is a work acceptable to God, and how can such a work come out of the natural and sinful heart? I trust our brother has clear ideas upon this vital subject and will state them to the council."

"But, Brother Pierce," said Elder Free, a retired minister from Yorktown, "the Bible says, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,' but if a man is elected and saved before he believes, I don't see the need of believing at all. I have always held and preached that believing comes first."

Doctor Wayte now spoke: "The difficulty arises, brethren, from the fact that things may be logically successive, which are contemporaneous as to time. Is not that your idea, Brother Young?"

"My idea is," he replied, "that I am to urge men everywhere to believe in Christ, and leave the work of regeneration to God."

"I still insist," said Mr. Pierce, "that

## Contending for the Faith

confusion of mind upon this point or an inversion of the divine order is a matter of grave importance, and I shall hope that when our young brother has given more thought and study to these things that he will come forth into the clear light of unmistakable truth."

Now Deacon Stearns spoke: "Did I understand the brother to state that some portions of the Bible are more important than others? I was afraid, from what I understood him to say, that he does not believe that the Bible is wholly inspired, and that every word is the veritable and exact word of God. My belief is that some of our seminaries at the present time are destroying faith in the old book and sending young men to preach who have no message. As for me, I accept every word of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, as dictated to holy men of old, who wrote down every word as it was given to them. I regard higher criticism as a device of Satan to undermine the faith once delivered to the saints. I sincerely trust our young brother is not tinctured with this root of all evil."

Rev. John Briggs, a young man who had recently taken charge of the church at Yorktown, now arose. His bearing was

## The Church at Libertyville

that of a person peculiarly satisfied with himself. He gently stroked his beautiful mustache, turned a pitying look upon Deacon Stearns, and said: "I am surprised that in this day of progressive thought any one should advocate the long discarded and preposterous theory of verbal inspiration. No theologian of any standing in this country, or in Germany, now holds it. In the light of the new thought, and by the employment of scientific methods in biblical study, we have learned that the Old Testament is almost entirely tradition, legend, and myth, and that not a little of the New Testament is untrue as history and unreliable as doctrine. The great work of modern critical scholarship is to separate the chaff from the wheat. I object to having our time consumed upon this occasion by discussions on the part of brethren who mean well but who are entirely out of touch with advanced thought."

Doctor Spear, trembling with excitement, was about to speak, when Brother Young said: "I regard this question as one of great importance, and beg leave to restate my views. I believe that the Bible is a revelation from God, but it seems to me that from the very nature of the case such a revelation

## Contending for the Faith

must be progressive. God is limited in making a revelation by man's capacity to receive it. So that the Old Testament is necessarily a partial, and to a certain extent an imperfect revelation, and hence of much less value to us than the larger revelation found in Christ and in the New Testament. As I trace the unfoldings of the great truths of the Bible, I find but little trouble with minor details, and the Bible becomes filled with beauty and power for me."

Much more discussion followed, until at length this matter was dropped, Doctor Spear saying, "I am not entirely satisfied with the position of our young brother, but am thankful that he does not indorse the infidel and atheistic views of some who claim to be preachers of the gospel." And as he said this he looked at Rev. John Briggs, who quietly stroked his mustache, while on his face there was a mingled expression of conceit, pity, and contempt.

Brother Calvin Pierce again spoke: "There is one more question which I would like to ask the candidate if I am not consuming too much time. The question which I have in my mind, and which I would like to propound, is this: Who were the spirits in prison to whom Christ is said to have

## The Church at Libertyville

preached? I regard this question as one of very great importance, as opening up the whole subject of purgatory, future punishment, and after-death repentance. It seems to me that the most subtle, dangerous, and terrible heresy of modern times is that some may have a chance to be saved after death, and I am greatly pained to note that this simple and lucid statement of Peter has been warped by some to sustain their own pernicious imaginings. Will our brother kindly tell us who these spirits in prison were, and when this preaching to them was done?"

Brother Young hesitated a moment and then frankly said: "I do not know what that passage of Scripture teaches; I have not yet been able to satisfy my own mind."

Brother Pierce was so surprised at this confession of ignorance that before he could recover himself Doctor Brown, a physician of Millersburg, said: "Mr. Moderator, one thing which I am particularly pleased with in my pastor is that he does not know everything, and when he does not know he knows it and is frank enough to say so. It makes a lot of us common folks feel that he knows how to sympathize with us, and as we know he is a student, we are confident

## Contending for the Faith

that he will grow. Sometimes I fear ministers, like doctors, claim to know things, where it would be a great deal more to their credit if they would confess ignorance."

If I had been a member of the council I should have publicly indorsed Doctor Brown's remarks, but as I was not, I kept still; but Deacon Stearns said: "Ignorance on some things is all right, but there are certain simple scriptural matters which every preacher, especially a graduate of the seminary, ought to understand."

But I cannot attempt to recount all the doings of that council. The discussion was protracted upon many questions, but I noticed that frequently when the brethren had succeeded in expressing their own views before the council, they were satisfied, seeming to think that the candidate for ordination indorsed their statements. I would not like to leave a wrong impression of this council. I presume, as this was my first experience, that the eccentricities and peculiarities of some brethren particularly impressed me. Not a little of the discussion was dignified and helpful. At length, when no one desired to ask any further questions, Brother Young was asked to retire while the council passed upon his case.

## The Church at Libertyville

Elder Free arose and said: "Mr. Moderator, I desire to express myself as highly pleased with our Brother Young's examination, and I move you that we declare ourselves as fully satisfied with his Christian experience, call to the ministry, and views of Christian doctrine, and that we proceed with his formal setting apart to the gospel ministry.

Deacon Barber seconded the motion.

Rev. John Briggs was the first to get the floor, although several others made the attempt. He said: "I cannot say that I am fully satisfied with Mr. Young's statements. He seems to be somewhat in bondage to the letter that killeth, although he is in a measure open-minded, and I hope is faced in the right direction. I am, however, unprepared to vote for the motion in its present form."

Brother Calvin Pierce was the next to speak. "I am far from being satisfied with our brother. He seems to have had no experience; his call to the ministry does not appear to have been any call at all, and he is thoroughly unorthodox in doctrine. The church is loaded down with this kind of preachers already. I don't know what we are coming to. I think we must be in the

## Contending for the Faith

last days, which Paul tells about, when people shall have itching ears. In my judgment about all our seminaries are doing in these days is to prepare young fellows to scratch these itching ears. I am entirely opposed to the motion." And Deacon Stearns, with a peculiarly determined expression upon his face, said: "Amen!"

Doctor Wayte now spoke: "Brethren, we need to proceed with great wisdom. It would be a serious matter to ordain an unfit man to the gospel ministry. It would also be very serious indeed to shut the door in the face of a worthy man who has spent years in preparation for the high calling. Personally, I believe that Brother Young is worthy of ordination. I have been very favorably impressed with his evident candor and honesty. He shows the Christlike spirit. He is a clear thinker, and undoubtedly holds firmly to the great fundamental doctrines of our faith. It would be impossible for him to agree with all of us. We see things differently and are in great danger of setting up our own fallible ideas as standards by which to measure others. Perhaps a slight modification of the motion would render it satisfactory to all, and so I move to amend

## The Church at Libertyville

it so that it will say, instead of 'we are entirely satisfied,' 'we are sufficiently well satisfied to proceed with the ordination.'"

The motion as thus amended was finally unanimously carried.

I could not remain to the formal ordination services in the evening. The papers reported an able sermon by Doctor Wayte, and impressive exercises throughout.

## XII

### Finding a Pastor

Many men of many minds,  
Many women of many kinds,  
'Tis a task by no means small,  
To find a man to suit them all.

FTER Rev. James Brown had closed his pastorate, steps were immediately taken to secure another pastor. A pulpit committee was appointed, composed of the following brethren: James Bright, George Graham, John Blackwell, Peter Burden, and myself.

In selecting this committee, great care was exercised not to appoint any persons who had taken an active part either for or

## Finding a Pastor

against the retiring pastor. The result was that with one or two exceptions those on the committee were not very active in the church work. Then too, an effort was made to have the different classes in the church represented on the committee. James Bright was in the life insurance business and a man in middle life. George Graham was a young man and a clerk in a clothing house. John Blackwell was a lawyer; he had been a police magistrate at one time, and was known as Squire Blackwell. Peter Burden was a mechanic in one of the mills, and I was a dry-goods merchant. Squire Blackwell was chosen chairman of the committee and James Bright secretary.

At the first meeting of the committee we decided, in view of the divided condition of the church and the prevailing hard times, that we could not offer a salary to exceed twelve hundred dollars. This was a reduction of three hundred dollars.

It was further decided that we must get a young man with a small family, some one who could get hold of the young people, and who could get along on the reduced salary. We also determined to send a statement of our desire to secure a pastor to our leading denominational papers and

## The Church at Libertyville

invite correspondence. We then adjourned our first meeting, feeling that we had made decided progress, and though no one of us had ever served on a committee of this nature before, we were confident that we were proceeding with wisdom and care. However, as I look at the matter now, I can see that we did little else than make grievous mistakes.

Letters came in great abundance, and at our second meeting Brother Bright produced a package of something over one hundred. Some men wrote for themselves and others got their friends to write for them. Some sent their pictures, newspaper clippings, and samples of their sermons.

“Well!” exclaimed Brother Graham, “it is evident that our church is widely known and is a very desirable field. We can simply take our pick of men.”

“That is so,” replied Peter Burden; “I always told my wife that Libertyville is the center of things. Our mills are known all over the country and ought to pay better wages than they do. We’ll have no trouble in getting a first-class man for twelve hundred dollars.”

“But we must exercise great care,” added James Bright. “We want to be sure to

## Finding a Pastor

get the right man. It is something like life insurance—you want to be sure your man is all right. Some companies are careless and take poor risks, but our company finds out all about a man before writing him up. When these letters began to come in as they have, I made up my mind that we must sift them by a rigid examination, so I have prepared a list of questions which, I believe, we ought to send to some friend of each applicant, or with slight change they might be sent direct to the applicant himself. Let me read what I have prepared:

- <sup>1</sup> (1) How old is he? (2) Is he married? (3) How large a family has he? (4) Is his wife a good helpmeet for him in his work? (5) Has he good health? (6) Has his wife good health? (7) How tall is he and about how much does he weigh? (8) Does he have a commanding appearance in the pulpit? (9) Does he use notes? (10) Is he a fluent speaker? (11) How long have you known him? (12) Is there anything in his character that you know of that would hinder him in his work as a minister of the gospel? (13) What do you consider his strongest points as a minister of the gospel? (14) What do you consider his weak points as a minister of the gospel? (15) Has he a college education? (16) From what college or seminaries did he graduate?

---

<sup>1</sup> A verbatim copy of a list of questions sent out recently by a pulpit committee.

## The Church at Libertyville

- (17) How high did he stand in his class?
- (18) Do you consider him a deep thinker? (19)
- Do you consider him a deep spiritual man? (20)
- Is he evangelistic in his thought? (21) Has he any personal magnetism? (22) Is he well liked in the church where he now is? (23) Is he well thought of in the community at large? (24)
- Is he having success in his work as pastor where he now is? (25) How many years' experience has he had as a pastor of a church? (26) What church did he come from before he took his present place? (28) Is he a hard worker? (29)
- Is he progressive? (30) Has he had many additions to the churches he has been pastor of?

Having concluded the reading of his list of questions, he added: "Perhaps I ought to explain my reason for asking some of these questions. Of course, we must know his age. Libertyville can't get along with any man who has crossed the 'dead line.' In fact, we have got to have a young man full of life and hustle. Then I have asked about his health and that of his wife. We don't want any invalids around here, nor do we want a great gang of children to take all the time and energy of the pastor and his wife. You may wonder why I said anything about his height and weight. My wife said: 'Whatever you do, don't get a little fellow; I can't bear a runt in the pulpit,' and

## Finding a Pastor

Mrs. Blackwell, who was present, replied: 'I'd just as soon see a runt as a bean-pole.' So you see we've got to take these things into account. Then we've got to have a college man, and deep thinker, and one who is full of personal magnetism, and who is progressive and up-to-date. In fact, there is not an unnecessary question here."

"Right there is the trouble, to my mind," said Squire Blackwell. "You haven't asked questions enough. I would inquire, is he orthodox? Can he sing? How long does he preach and pray? Has he good eyesight? Does he remember names well? Does he make lots of calls?"

"Yes," interrupted Brother Burden; "I would like to know if he calls on the poor folks or is he stuck up? And does he shake hands with everybody?"

"And I was about to say," added the squire, "does he pay his debts? And has he the fool notion of parting his hair in the middle? Does he meddle in politics? Where was he born? And has he got good blood in his veins?"

How many more questions the squire would have proposed I do not know, but I interrupted him, saying: "It is impossible to ask all the questions we would like to.

## The Church at Libertyville

Many of the things the squire refers to are important, but it seems to me Brother Bright's questions are sufficient to begin with. When we get answers to all of these we will have a basis upon which to decide whether or not we want a man to come as a candidate, and when he comes we can ask him all the questions we think best."

The result of the discussion was that Brother Bright's plan was adopted, and we adjourned to await replies.

At our next meeting we were greatly surprised at the report which our secretary brought of the result of the sending out of the list of questions. From a good many no reply whatever had come.

"I am not surprised at that," said Brother Graham, "for, of course, a good many saw at once that they could not measure up to our requirements."

But some seemed to misunderstand our motives entirely. I distinctly remember some of the replies which Brother Bright read. One brother wrote:

"If the Angel Gabriel should answer the questions you ask he would not stand the ghost of a chance of being called to your pulpit."

Another said:

## Finding a Pastor

"When you answer the enclosed questions I will fill out the blank which you sent me." The enclosed list was one hundred questions about our church. I recall among them the following:

Are your business affairs run by a clique? Do you pay your bills promptly? Are the members troubled much with Sunday sickness? How many cranks are there in the church? Are you willing to allow the pastor to run his own domestic affairs? How many of the leading members have the outs? Do you expect the pastor's wife to attend all the services, accompany the pastor in all his calls, be president of the woman's society, leader of the juniors, and superintendent of the primary department in the Sunday-school? What is the average age, height, and weight of your church? Does the male or female element predominate? What proportion of the members are sufficiently robust in health to attend two services on Sunday? How many members have you, and how many are good for nothing? What is the business reputation of your deacons? What is the average attendance at your prayer-meetings? What do you regard as the weak points in your church? Are you an eminently spiritual people? How many college graduates have you, and how did they rank in their respective classes? How did you get rid of your last pastor?

But I will not give any more of these questions. When Brother Bright finished

## The Church at Libertyville

the reading, Squire Blackwell was excited, and exclaimed:

“Well, that beats anything I ever heard. It is an insult to this church. I wonder if he thinks we will humiliate ourselves by answering such a list of impertinent questions?”

“I suppose,” interposed Brother Burden, “that he thinks he has just as much right to ask questions as we have.”

“Well, one thing is certain,” replied the squire, “those questions will never be answered with my consent.”

It was voted that these questions be returned to the writer unanswered. The next reply was of an entirely different character. The questions were all answered, but in a most unexpected manner.

Here are a few of the replies:

“How old is he?” He is old enough to know something and to know he does not know everything, and not too old to learn. “How large a family has he?” Large enough to worry all the old maids of both sexes in the church, and to call for the prompt payment of his salary. “How tall is he and how much does he weigh?” He is tall enough to look down on any committee that would ask such a question, and in character is heavy enough for any pastorate in the land. “Does he use notes?” Not so many as some

## Finding a Pastor

of his church-members do, especially if his salary is kept paid up. "Has his wife good health?" She would have if they could afford to keep help, and if the churches could learn that they have no special claims on a pastor's wife. "How high did he stand in his class?" He stood high enough to get on the rostrum on commencement day. "Has he any personal magnetism?" When in an ice-box, not very much. "Is there anything in his character that you know of that would hinder him in his work as a minister of the gospel?" That depends upon what the church wants. "Is he progressive?" He still believes the Bible, and continues to hold a few Baptist doctrines, but, on the whole, his case is hopeful.

But I have given enough of these remarkable replies. The other members of the committee were greatly stirred up over them and regarded them as a direct and serious insult to the committee, but I must confess that I began to feel that our list of questions contained several which ought not to have been asked, and that the whole scheme lacked dignity and seemed to put the ministry on the basis of persons seeking a job, or of an applicant for life insurance, but I said nothing.

We now examined those replies in which the questions had been answered in full or in part, and finally decided to invite one young brother, whose record seemed to be

## The Church at Libertyville

all that could be desired, to visit us as a candidate. In his case the entire thirty questions were all fully answered and that too, in a most gratifying manner. We were confident that he was just the man for us.

We sent for him at once and he came the following Sunday, but we were greatly disappointed in him. He looked much older than was reported, was hard of hearing, very bald-headed, painfully bow-legged, squint-eyed; and preached a sermon an hour and ten minutes long.

At the next meeting of the committee Squire Blackwell said: "It is just as I told you; we did not ask questions enough. I am in favor of enlarging the list. We must cover the whole ground if we expect to accomplish anything."

Brother Bright replied: "I have another plan to propose. I still think, however, that this idea of sending out questions is all right, and there is undoubtedly much in what the squire says, but I have another plan which I want to propose. It is evident that we have got to see the men for ourselves. A good many will not answer these questions, and when they are answered, I fear we cannot always rely on the replies. Now, my idea is this: we will

## Finding a Pastor

not have any more candidates, but simply have supplies. We will write to a lot of good men and invite them to come and spend each a Sunday as a supply. When they come, if we do not like them, we will be under no obligations to them; but when we strike a man who pleases us, we will question him and talk business to him."

This seemed to us all a capital plan, and soon the procession of supplies began. Among those invited were a good many friends of members of the church. Since they were coming simply as supplies, we felt free to invite many who otherwise would not have been invited.

Doctor Brainard, who came the fourth Sunday, captivated everybody, and at the close of the evening service he was asked to meet with the committee. After expressing our gratification at having him with us, Brother Bright, who had been appointed as spokesman, began asking the doctor questions. He asked him about his family, number of children and wife's health, what college and seminary he attended, and had just inquired as to his pastorates, their length and success, when the doctor said: "May I know why these questions are being asked of me?"

## The Church at Libertyville

“Certainly,” said Brother Bright. “We are looking for a pastor, and being favorably impressed with you to-day, it has occurred to us that possibly you may be adapted to our field.”

A peculiar smile came over his face as he replied: “So you regarded me as a candidate for your vacant pulpit. Let me hasten to assure you that I supposed when you invited me to supply for you, it was simply as a supply. I wanted to visit a friend near here, and so I came. I have no thought of leaving my present pastorate, and would hardly think of coming to Libertyville if I had. I regret that you have misled me in this matter, and, of course, you will not care to ask me any more questions.”

Squire Blackwell tried to apologize, but accomplished little in relieving an embarrassing situation.

Some of the committee, after the doctor had gone out, were in favor of giving up the plan of hearing supplies, but we did not see how it could be done; as the men were already invited, we could not very well tell them not to come, nor could we tell them that we wanted them as candidates, for we were not sure, until we heard them, how we wanted to regard them, and so we

## Finding a Pastor

concluded that we must go on through the list of eight more, but we decided not to arrange for any more supplies until we were through with these.

The next man who came was a special friend of Colonel Gorham; in fact, the colonel had somewhere attended the church of which he was pastor. The colonel was wealthy and gave quite liberally to the pastor's salary, when he liked the pastor. He was not a member of the church. His wife and daughter, however, were members, but their worldliness was a source of much trouble to some, especially to Deacon Stearns, who often said in deacons' meetings that they would be disciplined if it were not for the old colonel's money. The colonel had said so much about his friend, Doctor Connell, that we expected great things from him.

But we were doomed to disappointment. Doctor Connell was past fifty years of age, had never been married, was a regular book-worm, a tiresome preacher, and said he must have eighteen hundred dollars salary.

The colonel insisted on meeting with the committee, and said: "Now, gentlemen, there is the man for you, a gentleman of the old school, a great reader, a deep

## The Church at Libertyville

thinker, a strong preacher. He will build things up here and draw a class of hearers that amount to something."

"But, colonel," interrupted the squire, "we can pay but twelve hundred dollars, and he wants eighteen hundred dollars, we are told."

"What if he does?" urged the colonel; "we have been paying fifteen hundred dollars for a third-rate man. I'll pay the extra three hundred dollars myself the first year if you will call Doctor Connell."

Brother Bright now spoke: "Colonel, the trouble with Doctor Connell is he is too old and has no wife, and seems to lack in personal magnetism."

"Very well," replied the colonel, "go ahead and call some young popinjay who hasn't any experience or sense, and who has a wife that does not know as much as he does, but I give you warning now that if you do not call Doctor Connell you need not come around begging any more money from me." And the colonel withdrew, leaving the committee greatly disturbed.

George Graham was the first to speak. "This is serious. I do not see how we can get along without Colonel Gorham, and I am in favor of calling Doctor Connell."

## Finding a Pastor

"We might just as well close the house at once," said Mr. Burden, "as to call such a man as that; and what is more, I don't believe in bowing down to any man because he happens to have money. Colonel Gorham is an old skinflint, who grinds his men down to the lowest notch. We're better off without his money, and then to think of paying that old bachelor of his eighteen hundred dollars! No, sir; I'll never agree to anything of the kind."

The squire replied: "It will be hard to get along without the colonel's contribution, but I fear if we called Doctor Connell we would have to get along without anything from a good many others. The colonel will come around all right, I guess.

But I cannot attempt to tell all the trouble we had before we got through with our supplies, but I must say a few words about Rev. W. Pierpont Smythe. He was a young man who had been out of school but a few years, was a fluent speaker, made frequent references to himself and to his remarkable work at Bloomfield, where he was pastor. Many of the young people and some of the older ones were greatly pleased with him. So the committee decided to have a conference with him.

## The Church at Libertyville

Brother Bright, who was learning wisdom from experience, began cautiously to ask him questions. But he had not made much progress when Rev. W. Pierpont Smythe said: "I see, brethren, that you are thinking of me in connection with your vacant pulpit. I am not in the least surprised at this; on the contrary, I should have been much surprised had it been otherwise. My work at Bloomfield is so widely known that I am constantly receiving flattering calls from all parts of the country. I am now considering three very important churches, and it is doubtful if I can entertain your call at all. I shall be very sorry to disappoint you, but I have got to disappoint a good many, and of course, I must take into account the future. I must have a field where my gifts will not be hampered. That is the trouble with Bloomfield; I have done practically all that can be done there. I fear Libertyville is too narrow a field for me, still it might do for a few years. Should I decide to come here the work would need to be thoroughly reorganized. Your methods, as I understand them, are entirely behind the times. Your building would have to be redecorated, and I never would think of tolerating such

## Finding a Pastor

music as you had to-day, and my salary would have to be eighteen hundred dollars to begin with, and an assurance of an increase at the end of the first year; but with the large congregations which I would draw, this would be a very simple matter. I will say this, that while I cannot now tell what I will do, you can go right ahead and extend the call and I will give you my answer in a few weeks."

George Graham and Mr. Bright were in favor of calling him at once, but I suggested that we take time to look up his work at Bloomfield. We did this and found that the work, at the beginning of his pastorate, had had a veritable boom, but that reaction and division had set in, congregations had run down, finances were in bad shape, and Mr. Smythe had been asked to resign.

We heard all of our supplies without being able to agree upon any one of them. Four months had now passed, and we seemed to have made no progress in securing a pastor. Brother Bright was somewhat discouraged, but was in favor of revising the list of questions and trying that plan again.

But Squire Blackwell said: "I have been

## The Church at Libertyville

thinking this whole matter over very carefully, and I have a plan which I believe will work. Let us go over all our correspondence and select four good men, the best in the lot, and invite them to come as candidates. Then, after we have heard them all, we will call a meeting of the church and by ballot select the best man of the four."

This plan received the hearty indorsement of the committee, and the names were at once selected and the invitations sent to them. It did not occur to us to tell these men our plan. I now suspect that they would not have come had they known of our competitive scheme, but as it was, they all came, and with one exception made very favorable impressions.

A meeting of the church was at once called. The attendance was large, and Squire Blackwell, with great hopefulness, explained his plan to the people, and the balloting began. Ballot after ballot was taken and no decision was reached. Then time was taken to set forth the merits and demerits of the different candidates, and the discussions became somewhat heated, as Deacon Stearns charged one candidate with being unorthodox, and another candidate

## Finding a Pastor

happened to be a personal friend of our late pastor. After the discussion the balloting was resumed, and continued until eleven o'clock, with no prospect whatever of reaching a decision. Then several censured the pulpit committee for wasting six months, and charged it with being responsible for the existing trouble.

Squire Blackwell replied: "Brethren, I for one have had enough of pulpit committee work to last me the remainder of my life. I want to see some one else try it a while. I hereby resign from the committee."

All the other members of the committee at once followed his example. I must say that the unanimity and promptness with which our resignations were accepted showed scant appreciation of the hard work we had done. A new committee, composed of Judge Straight, Elder Heartwell, and Brethren Goodwill, Smith, and Slocum was at once appointed.

At the first meeting of the new committee, Charley Goodwill told me, Elder Heartwell led in prayer and prayed so earnestly and touchingly that the committee might have divine guidance that all felt that this was of supreme importance. It

## The Church at Libertyville

was decided that it was unnecessary to reduce the salary. They further determined that they would consider but one man at a time, and that they would not invite any man to visit the church as a candidate until they had satisfied themselves as a committee that he could be recommended to the church as pastor.

The result was that within a few weeks Rev. Gideon M. Mitchell, a man somewhat past middle life, was called and entered upon a pastorate which extended over ten years, in which the church made substantial and encouraging growth.

## XIII

### Aunt Dorcas

Now abideth these three gifts—

Gifts bestowed from heaven above;

The last, the greatest of the three,

Faith, and hope, and love.



ESTERDAY I received a letter from Libertyville, and I am not ashamed to confess that it was wet with my tears when I was through reading it.

## Aunt Dorcas

The following extract from it will explain the reason:

Dear Aunt Dorcas is dead. She had been failing for some months. There appeared to be no disease, just a wearing out of the dear old body. I wish you could have met her during these last weeks. Perfect love had cast out all fear, and she was supremely happy. Her face was simply radiant with hope, and heaven seemed all about her. She sent many messages of love and encouragement to the homes of poverty and suffering, where she had so often been a very messenger of heaven. Her room was constantly filled with the fragrance of beautiful flowers, tributes of the sincere sympathy of loving hearts.

Her last words were: "I have tried to be faithful. I am going home now, to be with Him and my loved ones."

Her funeral was held yesterday at the church. The gathering was a most remarkable one. The rich and poor met and wept together, and all felt that they had lost a personal friend, and when the choir sang softly the hymn she loved so well and sang so often—

Some day the silver cord will break  
And I no more, as now, shall sing;  
But, oh! the joy, when I awake,  
Within the palace of the King,

a strange hush came over all, and it seemed as though we were at the very doorway of the palace of the King and could almost hear her voice of praise within.

## The Church at Libertyville

The pastor spoke very beautifully and tenderly from the words, "She hath done what she could," and all thanked God for such a noble life, and wondered what the church and what Libertyville would be without Aunt Dorcas.

Many a poor mother pressed her babe closer to her breast, and sobbed aloud, when she realized that Aunt Dorcas would never come to her home again, bringing good cheer, comfort, and courage. Many lingered at the casket, as they took a last look at that dear, sweet face, that even in death was wreathed with a beautiful smile. What will our prayer-meetings, our socials, our missionary meetings be, what will anything be, without Aunt Dorcas?

But I will not copy any more of this letter. I have read and reread it many times to-day, and have been living over again many scenes of the dear old Libertyville days.

I wish I could tell you about Aunt Dorcas, so that you would really know her. But with my poor way of telling things I cannot hope to do this; still I must write down some of the many recollections which crowd upon me.

She rarely referred to her earlier life, but one evening in our home our conversation took us back over the past, and Aunt Dorcas told wife and me the story of her life. I cannot here attempt to repeat what

## Aunt Dorcas

she related to us. But I know our hearts were greatly touched as she told us of her happy youth, her school experiences, her devoted parents, her marriage to a noble man, her charming home, and her two dear little ones, and then of the dark days of protracted sickness, reverses, hard struggles, death of loved ones, till all the waves and billows passed over her and she was left crushed and alone in the world. For a time she prayed that she too might die. Then there came into her life a wonderful experience of the Saviour's presence and love, and out of her unspeakable bereavement and sorrow she came forth to dedicate her life to helping others. I shall never forget that life-story, as she told it that night. The memory of it has helped me all these years to lead a better life.

But I must tell some of the incidents that come to my mind as I think of Aunt Dorcas.

You will remember that in one of the earlier chapters of these reminiscences I spoke of Harry Weeks. He was the poor fellow who had been a drunkard before he was converted and who fell once after he joined the church. You will also recall that Doctor Spear and Deacon Stearns wanted

## The Church at Libertyville

to have him excluded from the church, and Deacon Perkins and Charley Goodwill pleaded for him and prevented such action. But there was a very interesting incident connected with this case of Harry Weeks, which has vividly come to my mind as I have been thinking of Aunt Dorcas.

It occurred at the prayer-meeting the week after the deacons had been considering the report made by Deacon Stearns and Doctor Spear. Just before the close of the meeting Harry arose with some hesitation and said: "If you are willing to hear me I would like to say a few words."

"We shall be very glad to hear from you, Brother Weeks," replied the pastor.

Then he went on: "I am ashamed to stand here before you. I know I am a miserable sinner and that I have disgraced myself and the church, but I believe the Lord has forgiven me and I have vowed to him that I will never touch liquor again. I know I deserved to be turned out of the church, and I am very grateful to the deacons for deciding to give me another chance, but I want to tell you that I owe everything to Aunt Dorcas. I started down the street from the place where I room last Monday night, and had gone but a

### Aunt Dorcas

block or two when I met Deacon Stearns going to the deacons' meeting. I knew he was on the committee, as he had been to see me. I asked him what the deacons were going to do, and he said there was only one thing that could be done. That my sin was so disgraceful that the honor of the church and the good of the cause demanded my exclusion from the church. I knew I deserved it. I could not say a word. I wished I was dead. I started on downtown. I was completely discouraged. It seemed to me that there was no use in trying any more. I thought of the boys down at Murphy's saloon, and the welcome I could have there, and I said, 'I'll go back to my old life and I won't try to be decent any longer.' Just then some one spoke, 'Good evening, Harry.' I looked up and there at her gate stood Aunt Dorcas. I guess she saw I was in trouble, for she reached out her hand and took mine and said: 'Are you in a hurry? If not, I wish you would come in a few minutes, I want to have a little talk with you.' Murphy's place began to lose its attraction at once. I went in and sat down and she looked at me just as my mother used to look, and with tears in her eyes she said: 'Harry, you are

## The Church at Libertyville

not going to give up, are you?' I said, 'Aunt Dorcas, there's no use. I've disgraced everybody. Deacon Stearns says they are going to turn me out of the church; everybody will look down on me, and I've about made up my mind that there is no place for me except the old life.' 'O Harry,' she replied, 'you must not talk that way. I'll do everything I can to help you, and you have lots of friends who will stand by you. You will lose everything if you turn back. You have had too much of that old life. The Master loves you just as well as ever, and he will help you,' and then she said: 'Harry, let's kneel and tell him all about it.' We knelt and such a prayer I never heard before. As she went on praying my heart began to melt. I first decided that I would not go to Murphy's; then I said in my heart that I would try again. Then I thought of the church, and as she went on pleading I said that no matter what happened—even though I should be turned out of the church—I would never give up. And then when she stopped she said: 'Harry, won't you try to pray too?' Well, I prayed as best I could, and the Lord has had mercy on me. And here I am. I can't tell you how thankful I am that I am

### Aunt Dorcas

still a member of the church, and that I met Aunt Dorcas last Monday night."

Harry Weeks is a prosperous business man now and for a number of years has given very large sums to Aunt Dorcas to help her in her work for the needy.

Aunt Dorcas was a great favorite among the young people, and knew how to help and encourage them in their work. When they asked the privilege of organizing a young people's society, Deacon Stearns was much opposed to it. He said in the business meeting when the matter was being discussed: "I've been a member of a regular Baptist church for forty years and a deacon for twenty-five years, and the church has always been good enough for me. It looks to me as though the young people think they can improve upon the New Testament plan, and that they know more than the older members of the church. With the women organized, and the children organized, and the young people organized, I would like to know where the church is coming in. What is the use of having a church?"

When he had taken his seat, there was a hesitancy on the part of others to speak. Charley Goodwill started to get up and

## The Church at Libertyville

then stopped. It was evident that the leaders among the young people were greatly disturbed, but did not dare to trust themselves to speak. Then Aunt Dorcas, who rarely ever spoke on business matters, arose, and with a smile on her face and winsomeness in her voice said: "I love the young people, and believe in them with all my heart, and I am so glad they want to do more work for the Master. And with dear Deacon Stearns I love the church too, more than I can tell, but I have not thought of a young people's society as any more separate from the church than the Sunday-school or my pastor's helpers. I think the young people want to band themselves together simply to help the church, and that by doing this they will love the church all the more and get closer to it. I too have been in the church a good many years, and have often felt that something needed to be done to call out our young people and make them a greater power in the kingdom, and I believe that this movement among the young people is of the Lord, and is full of promise for the church, and that we ought to keep very close to our young people and encourage them in every way possible."

## Aunt Dorcas

The vote was then taken, and not even Deacon Stearns opposed it, although I think he did not vote for it.

Dear Aunt Dorcas, everybody loved her and the boys and girls and young people used to go to her with all their troubles, and she comforted and counseled them and saved them from many mistakes. I recall one evening when she was at our house, she told us of a very interesting experience. She used to talk freely in our home. She would say: "Now, Brother and Sister Bradley, you know I must tell somebody. I must talk, and I know you never tell my secrets to anybody." We were glad to have her feel such confidence in us and to be able to be of some help to her.

I will tell the story as nearly as I can as she told it to us. I am sure she would not object to my telling it now:

"Well," began Aunt Dorcas, "I must tell you what a time I have had saving Anna Ward, dear girl, from serious trouble. She came running into my room about a week ago and I saw at a glance that something was wrong. 'O Aunt Dorcas!' she said, 'what shall I do? I don't dare to tell papa or mamma, or anybody. I know I am awfully wicked, but I just can't help it.

## The Church at Libertyville

You don't think we can help falling in love, do you, Aunt Dorcas? I know you don't. Well, I'm in love—madly, desperately in love—with Dan Woodward, and I am going to marry him. I'm going to run away with him next Wednesday night.' And then she threw her arms about my neck and burst into tears. I felt terribly, because you know Dan Woodward has only been here about six months, and I have heard very unsatisfactory rumors about him. But then, he is a fine-looking, dashing young fellow, just the kind to attract such an impulsive, sentimental girl as Anna. But I knew if I said anything against him she would resent it and cling to him all the closer, so I kissed her and said:

“‘ Yes, dear; it is natural that you should fall in love, and Dan is certainly a fine-looking young man; but I don't quite like the idea of your running away, as though you were doing something to be ashamed of.’

“‘ I'm not ashamed of it, Aunt Dorcas, but I know papa and mamma would never consent, and so there is no other way, and then Dan says they will soon forgive us, and we can come back here and live and everything will be all lovely. Don't you think that will be the way of it, Aunt Dorcas?’

## Aunt Dorcas

“I shook my head and said: ‘I don’t know, dearest; it is serious business. But let me tell you something which happened when I was a girl.’

“‘Did you run away with some one, Aunt Dorcas?’

“‘No, dear, but I had a friend who did. Jennie Bright was my very dearest girl friend. You often remind me of her. A handsome young fellow by the name of Donald DeLong came to our place and attended our church, and in less than six months Jennie was greatly in love with him, and had promised to be his wife. She told me everything, but somehow I was anxious and was afraid she did not know him well enough.’

“‘Are you afraid, Aunt Dorcas, that I don’t know Dan well enough? Any one can see that Dan is all right.’

“‘That is just what Jennie said about Donald. When he spoke to Mr. Bright, Jennie’s father, about it, he told him that he would let him have his answer in a few weeks.’

“‘Oh, I have told Dan that I wished he would talk with papa about it, but he says it is lots better to do the talking after we are married.’

## The Church at Libertyville

“‘ The next week Jennie and Donald ran away and were married. She did not tell me a thing about it beforehand. She wrote me afterward that Donald did not want her to. Mrs. Bright sent for me as soon as Jennie had gone. Anna, I never saw such grief before. Mr. and Mrs. Bright were both heartbroken. “Oh,” cried Mrs. Bright, between her sobs, “Jennie was always such a good, sweet girl, and all we wanted was time to look up Donald’s record to be sure that everything was all right. We tried to explain all this to her. How could she do this? How could she break our hearts? Poor, dear girl; she could not have realized what she was doing.” Mr. Bright did not say much, but he put his arm around me and kissed me and said: “Dorcas, death would have been easier than this.”’

“‘ O Aunt Dorcas; do you suppose my papa and mamma would feel like that? Oh, dear, what shall I do?’

“‘ Wait, Anna; let me tell you the rest of the story. I got a letter in a few days from the South, where they had gone, telling me how happy she was and how good Donald was, and urging me to make matters all right with her folks.’

“‘ So everything came out all right. I am

## Aunt Dorcas

so glad. That is the way it will be with Dan and me, and, Aunt Dorcas, you will make it all right with mamma and papa, won't you?' and she hugged and kissed me before I could go on.

"Wait, Anna; you must hear the rest of it before you ask me to make any promises. It was six weeks before I got another letter. It was the saddest, most distressing letter I ever received. It began: 'O Dorcas, what can I do? How can I tell you? I am completely crushed. How I wish I could die. Donald is a gambler.' And then the letter told the whole wretched story.' 'You don't think Dan is a gambler, do you, Aunt Dorcas?' exclaimed Anna with a scared look on her face. But I went on about Jennie. 'Her folks wrote for her to come home, but she was too proud to do that, and she clung to her husband for more than a year, and then he deserted her, and poor, heartbroken Jennie, with a little baby girl, came back to her old home, but oh, so changed! Her life was blighted, the sunshine was all gone, and she lived but a few years.'

"When I finished, Anna sat still for a little while, looking me in the face. Her large, black eyes were pathetic with tears,

## The Church at Libertyville

but the lines about her mouth showed a forming decision. Then she spoke: 'Aunt Dorcas, I'm not going to run away with Dan. I love him, and if he really loves me, he will tell papa and mamma all about it.'"

I learned from Aunt Dorcas, later, that Dan positively refused to speak to Anna's parents about it. A few weeks afterwards he left town, taking over one thousand dollars of his employer's money with him.

Aunt Dorcas' life abounded in helpfulness everywhere. My memory is full of incidents of the beautiful, tactful, loving things which she did.

## XIV

### Rules and Regulations

Wheels without and wheels within,  
Wheels of good and wheels of sin;  
Wheels that help the world along,  
And wheels that keep things going wrong.

**E**V. EZRA ADAMS was a great organizer. When he became our pastor he insisted that the most urgent need of the church was a thorough reorganization. His first move was to have

## Rules and Regulations

us adopt an entirely new set of rules. He said, "The way to avoid church troubles is to have rules that meet all cases which may come up." And so we attempted to make and adopt rules to cover every conceivable phase of church life.

Judge Straight, who was in favor of the move, said half-jestingly before we got through: "I fear we shall need a special body of scribes and lawyers to study and interpret these rules." And Deacon Stearns thought we were departing from the simplicity of the gospel. But I noticed that after a few months had elapsed, we fell back into the old ways of doing business which had prevailed before we adopted the new rules.

Having got the rules fixed up, Pastor Adams proceeded to the work of organization. He organized the boys, and the girls, and the young people, and the juniors, and the young women, and the young men, and the men, and the women, and had fifteen standing committees, besides captains of tens and colonels of fifties. The plan of organization with the names of all the committees and officers was published in a monthly church paper. This paper was paid for by advertisements.

## The Church at Libertyville

There were some objections to this way of meeting the expenses of the publication. Deacon Perkins said at one of our business meetings: "I have reason to know that the business men do not regard our church paper as a good advertising medium, and I fear we are not helping our church any by urging them to advertise in it."

"Yes," added Deacon Smith, "Mr. Cook, of Cook & Hastings, said to me a day or two ago that he regarded the securing of that kind of advertising as a straight 'hold-up scheme.' And he said that since our church had begun it all the other churches were going into it, and many of the business men were becoming disgusted and saying some uncomplimentary things about the churches."

"It is not the business side of it that disturbs me," said Doctor Spear. "They do not have to take advertisements unless they want to, but I object to having an advertising sheet distributed in the church on Sunday morning, to be read during the time of public worship."

But I did not intend to speak of this church paper. It did not, however, continue very long. Perhaps I ought not to say it, but some of us felt that Brother

## Rules and Regulations

Adams was much more gifted in starting things than he was in keeping them going. He thought the trouble was with the church, but I think some of the trouble was in the fact that there seemed to be no demand for a good many of his committees and organizations.

It was during his pastorate that trouble began with this matter of organizations, which extended over a period of several years. The Sunday-school and nearly all the societies and clubs were organized entirely independently of the church, and frequently there was a conflict of dates and plans. The most trouble, however, arose between the three women's societies. The foreign mission circle was first organized. Mrs. Paulson was at the head of this, and was an intelligent and excellent woman, but she talked foreign missions so much that some grew tired of the whole subject.

One evening in the prayer-meeting after enlarging upon the needs of Africa, and the unresponsiveness of the church at home, she said what she had often said before: "The regret of my life is that my health failed when I was a young woman and I was unable to go to the foreign field." Mrs. Sharp, who sat next to Mrs. Bradley,

## The Church at Libertyville

remarked so that several heard her: "It is a regret in which many of us share." But I must say that Mrs. Sharp was lacking in interest in foreign missions. When asked to join the foreign mission circle she replied: "When we get Squatters' Ranch converted I'll come in." Mrs. Paulson said to her: "Squatters' Ranch is not a drop in the bucket compared to China's millions. And what is more, we can never evangelize the home field until we have a consuming desire to save those who are far away in heathen darkness. The church at home is becoming powerless because of its narrowness."

"That is not the trouble," said Mrs. Church, who was present and always ready to oppose foreign missions; "we are dissipating our energies when we ought to be concentrating them upon the heathen at home."

Shortly after this talk, at a meeting of the society, Mrs. Peters, the daughter of a pioneer preacher, said: "I have been thinking over this matter for some time and have been talking with some of the ladies and find that they feel just as I do. I believe that the time has come when we as women ought to do some home mission work. I

## Rules and Regulations

have just been reading about Miss Moore's work among the Negroes, and also the condition among the Indians and among the foreigners and in the neglected portions of our own land. I propose hereafter to do what I can for the heathen in our own country. I invite all the ladies who want to help organize a home mission circle to meet at my home to-morrow at three o'clock. I have talked with the pastor about this, and he is in favor of it."

Mrs. Paulson at once replied: "I regret exceedingly to hear Mrs. Peters speak as she does. This is no time to divide our forces. The calls from India have never before been so urgent. The Lord is wonderfully opening the doors. I believe in home missions, but just think of the opportunities which everybody here has to hear the gospel, and then think of the millions in heathen darkness pleading for missionaries. I am sure this is a very great mistake, and I hope none of the sisters will help to organize another society and so divide our forces and do harm."

Mrs. Peters was about to speak when Mrs. Church arose. "I think now is a good time for me to say a word. There is a whole lot of things needed around this

## The Church at Libertyville

church to make it decent, and there is no money to get them. Then there is the day nursery and the mission Sunday-school, and half a dozen other things right here needing help. I suppose this other mission work is good enough for those who can afford it, but for one I think charity ought to begin at home, and I am in favor of having a woman's aid society. I know a neighbor of mine who spends her whole time running around looking after other folks' affairs and letting her own home go, and I think that is about the way we women are doing in our church work. I want all those who would like to help form an aid society to meet at my home at two o'clock Friday."

The discussion which followed was more spirited and personal than helpful, and when the meeting adjourned Mrs. Paulson and Mrs. Peters did not speak to each other. Both of the other societies were duly started, and shortly afterward a woman, whom I think they called an associational director, came and organized a young woman's foreign mission society and a children's band. Later another came and organized a young woman's home mission society and also a baby band. At first the women attempted to collect only two cents

## Rules and Regulations

a week from each one for missions; but soon all sorts of special appeals began coming in, until more money went through the treasuries of the women's circles for missions than was given direct by the church. In fact, the women and young people almost entirely stopped giving through the church treasury. In the meantime, Mrs. Church had inaugurated a series of entertainments and suppers to raise money for the aid society.

Deacon Perkins said to me: "I don't believe in turning the church into a show-house and a restaurant," and I heard a good many complaining about being urged to buy tickets at all the services of the church.

At one of our advisory board meetings about this time, Judge Straight said: "I am not entirely satisfied with the way our church work is carried on. Our different societies are too independent of the church and of each other, and I fear they are tending to division. But I confess that I do not know what should be done."

"It is plain enough to me," Deacon Stearns answered, "I am opposed to all these societies. The church is good enough for me. The women are making a regular

## The Church at Libertyville

mess of it. We've got to get back to Paul's method of regulating them, or there will never be any peace."

Charley Goodwill now spoke: "Well, if we suppress the young people and the women we will not have much left. Of course I recognize that there is something in what Judge Straight says, and I am in favor of having the societies work more under the direction of the church and more in harmony with each other. I think when the speakers who come here to the State Convention have been heard we will have no trouble in fixing matters up."

The State Convention to which Charley Goodwill referred was to meet in Libertyville in October. It came and was a great meeting. I was chairman of the entertainment committee, and had some very interesting experiences. There were lots of nice people who came, for whom it was a pleasure to provide entertainment. There were some, however, who had to be changed and assigned four times before they would stay where they were sent, and then they complained a good deal. Mrs. Sharp said: "Deacon Bradley, if I were on that committee I would send them back home and see if they would have sense enough to

## Rules and Regulations

stay there, for that is evidently where they belong."

I confess that it did me good to hear her talk that way. Then I heard of some who had accepted entertainment who did not attend any of the meetings, but spent their time trading and sightseeing. They told the folks where they were stopping, "We don't care much for the Convention, and as we cannot get to Libertyville very often, we want to improve our time." But I did not refer to the Convention in order to tell these things, but to speak of the missionary addresses and their effect upon our church.

Doctor Hoag, a fine-looking, venerable-appearing man, delivered the first of these addresses. He was home mission secretary, and his theme was "The Fundamental Requirement in Missions." He made an exceedingly strong appeal for work in America. Mrs. Peters said to me, "That was the best speech I ever heard. I wonder how it made Mrs. Paulson feel?" Doctor Hoag said, among many other things: "I believe in foreign missions, but America is God's chosen land. Out from this country must go the influences to save the world. We must save America or all is lost. For-

## The Church at Libertyville

eigners by the hundreds of thousands are coming to our shores. If we can save them, then we can hope to reach those in distant lands. Our supreme, our fundamental work is to take America for Christ." It was a most convincing effort, and I felt a good deal of satisfaction in knowing that Mrs. Bradley had encouraged Mrs. Peters in her work.

At the very next session Doctor Taxman spoke for foreign missions. He was a man of beautiful spirit and great earnestness, and spoke with much feeling. His topic was, "The First Duty of the Church." As he portrayed the awful and pathetic condition of the heathen, many in the audience were moved to tears. He said: "I believe in home missions, and will take a second place to none in love for my native land, but we can never save this land unless we have a deep love for all lands. If we are unfaithful to the heathen, God will pass us by. The first duty of the church is to carry out the Great Commission and go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The church in many places is dying because of the narrowness of its vision." It was another strong address, and as I listened to it I made up my mind

## Rules and Regulations

to encourage Mrs. Bradley to join Mrs. Paulson's society too. I heard Mrs. Paulson remark to Charley Goodwill, "I hope that after listening to that address Mrs. Peters will see things in their true light."

That evening the principal speech was by our State missionary, Doctor Grim. He was an impetuous, enthusiastic speaker, and carried everything by storm. His subject was, "The Unit in Our Work." Accepting and emphasizing everything that Doctor Hoag had urged about America, he said: "I believe in home and foreign missions, but the State is the unit of American life. We are responsible for this State as for no other portion of the globe. Nobody else is coming in here to save this State. We must evangelize it or it will not be evangelized. If we would have churches to support home and foreign missions we must plant and nurture them right here in our State. The women are organized for foreign and home and church work; why do they not organize for State work?" "That is a new idea," I heard Mrs. Smith say. "I will look into that as soon as the Convention is over." It was a rousing effort, and when Doctor Grim appealed for money to make up the deficit on the year's work

## The Church at Libertyville

the delegates pledged their churches liberally. But I learned afterward that many of the churches refused to approve the action and there was a large shrinkage in the pledges.

The next day Doctor Mann spoke on city missions. His topic was, "Beginning at Jerusalem." He was a man noted for his self-sacrificing work, and his character gave great weight to his words. He began: "I believe in all the missionary causes which have been so ably presented, and find great joy in contributing to them, but—." I wondered that each of these brethren thought it necessary to declare his belief in the other causes. It seemed to me that it would have been better if he had let that be taken for granted. "But," he went on to say, "the American city is the storm-center of modern life. The cities are growing with unparalleled rapidity. The forces of evil are congregating here. The church of God is losing ground in these centers. We must strengthen our city churches and redouble our efforts. The destiny of our beloved republic, the destiny of the world depends upon these cities, and now is the time to save them." It was a most remarkable address. I heard Mrs. Church

## Rules and Regulations

remark to Mrs. Sharp: "I guess that settles it. I don't believe we'll hear much more from Mrs. Paulson and Mrs. Peters with their absurd notions about missions."

I shall not attempt to tell about other addresses that were made, but it turned out that the State Convention only made matters worse in our church. There were one or two more societies organized, and each one seemed more zealous than ever in its particular work. This went on until Rev. James Brown became our pastor. He not only reorganized the choir, as I have already related, but also the church. He had not been with us long before he called the official board together and said: "I am not satisfied with the way in which this church is organized. We have too many societies and committees. It takes all our energy to keep the machinery going. My idea is that there ought to be no societies in the church. The different kinds of work should be looked after by departmental committees." In the discussion which followed Judge Straight said: "I have been disturbed by the confusion and lack of business harmony in our church and am disposed to favor the pastor's plan."

Mr. Banks, the treasurer, added: "If

## The Church at Libertyville

this plan means that all moneys collected by the young people and by the women and by all other societies are to pass through the church treasury, I am heartily in favor of it. We now have seven different treasurers handling money in this church."

"Well," answered Charley Goodwill, "I have an idea they are handling a good deal more than would be handled if we had but one treasurer. I am not worried so much about these different societies as some are. I think they are doing good. We can never all see things alike. I believe in division of labor and in letting people work where they are interested. Still, I shall not oppose the pastor's plan."

"I am sure," exclaimed Deacon Stearns, "that we have greatly departed from the simplicity of the gospel. Our young people ought to be in subjection to their elders, and the women ought to learn in silence at home of their husbands, instead of chasing after clubs and circles and the like." "Yes," added Bro. Jeremiah Payne, "I think these are some of the signs of the times and evidences of the manifestation of the Man of Sin."

The result of it all was that we finally by a small majority vote adopted a new set

## A Faithful Steward

of rules and did away with all societies in the church. We had great trouble in finding persons to serve on the different committees. When it came to that on woman's work, Mrs. Sharp suggested that Deacon Stearns be made chairman. The deacon replied, "It would be a good thing if some one were appointed who has some proper ideas of what is becoming to the sex." That year was so full of confusion and trouble that Charley Goodwill called it "The Reconstruction Period." But it was a reconstruction which did not reconstruct.

## XV

### A Faithful Steward

Patience, with tact and good sense combined,  
Is a union of gifts not easy to find;  
When found in a preacher, and also his wife,  
The church that he serves will be kept free from  
strife.

 HAVE already told of the coming to Libertyville of Rev. Gideon M. Mitchell. His call by the church was not enthusiastic. It was, however, unanimous. I mean by that, no one voted

## The Church at Libertyville

against him. I noticed, however, that several did not vote at all. In fact, the church had become tired, and many felt as Mrs. Perkins expressed it, "We are ready to call anybody who is respectable."

The new pastor was not a brilliant preacher, and his personal appearance was a little against him. He was somewhat stooped, and lacked ease and grace in the pulpit. His voice too had a quality which was rather unpleasant until one became accustomed to it. But there was in all his work a sincerity, an intelligence, a directness, a frankness, a sympathy, and a manliness that secured for him the respect, the confidence, and the love of the people. Then, if possible, we thought more of Mrs. Mitchell than we did of him. Aunt Dorcas said of her: "She is one of the dearest women I ever knew. She always knows the right word to say and the best thing to do." Hearts were opened to her, knowing that secrets revealed would be secrets still. She was a great favorite among the young people, and Charley Goodwill was heard to say: "I would be jealous of Mrs. Mitchell if I did not think so much of her myself; and then too, the young people seem to think more than ever of me since she came."

## A Faithful Steward

Shortly after Mr. Mitchell became our pastor there was called by some one, without consulting him, a meeting of the women of the church. It had been thoroughly, though quietly, worked up, and the women were there in full force. After the meeting was called to order, Mrs. Peters was the first to speak: "I have just been in attendance at our Association at Millersburg," she said, "and have come home determined that something must be done. The reports there given of the women's work in this church were simply ridiculous. Why, the women in the little church at Boggsville raised more money for home missions than we did. I was so ashamed that I did not know what to do."

"I thoroughly agree with Sister Peters that something must be done," added Mrs. Paulson. "Our offerings to foreign missions were even less than to home missions. Our young women are doing nothing, and the children are being taught nothing about missions. Our church will die if this awful neglect goes on. I believe, now that we have got a new pastor, we ought to go right ahead and organize for work. This committee plan is an utter failure."

"I suspect," replied Mrs. Sharp, "that

## The Church at Libertyville

the reason it is a failure is that nobody has tried to work it. All the women who knew about missions refused to serve on the committees. Think of my being chairman of such a committee! I took the position because nobody else would, and because Deacon Stearns did not want me to."

Mrs. Sowerby now spoke: "I too was at the Association, and was so humiliated that I came home before the meetings were over. Mrs. Potter, of Plainview, wanted to know what ailed our church, and I told her the plain truth, that we were trying to work a fool plan that the men had adopted. I for one think we have let the men run things around here about long enough."

It was generally known that male authority in the Sowerby home was an entirely negligible quantity.

She went on: "What do men know about these things? They thought they were instituting a great reform when they adopted a lot of rules and regulations to keep the women from running off with the church. I am in favor of just telling them to mind their own business, and then go ahead and organize for our work. That is the way I have to do at home, and that is the way I believe in doing in the church."

## A Faithful Steward

"I am not in favor of declaring war upon the men," said Mrs. Church. "We couldn't very well get along without them. And yet something ought to be done. The building is getting out of repair and we are doing nothing for the nursery or for anything else in the city. I think the best thing is to go right ahead, and I move that we proceed at once to reorganize our old societies."

Thus far Mrs. Mitchell had taken no part, but Mrs. Perkins now said: "I wish we might know what our pastor's wife thinks about this." Mrs. Mitchell replied, "Since coming to Libertyville, Mr. Mitchell and I have frequently discussed the situation. I need not say that we are not satisfied with things as they are. I fear, however, that any final or decisive action to-day would be a little premature. It is a matter of such importance that it calls for time fully to consider it. Then too, whatever is done ought to have the approval of the entire church. I am sure that the men of this church are earnestly desirous of securing the same ends that we are seeking, and that we must have their hearty co-operation if we succeed. I visited a church recently where they have a plan of work

## The Church at Libertyville

with which I was greatly pleased. They had but one woman's society, and then had committees to look after the different parts of the work. They told me that it worked admirably and that they would not for anything go back to the old method. It helps all to have a comprehensive view and promotes harmony and good-will. Now if I may suggest what seems wisest to me, it is that all we do to-day be to appoint a committee to confer with the officers of the church expressing our dissatisfaction with existing conditions and our readiness to co-operate in adopting measures for improvement. I am sure that Mr. Mitchell will be very glad to have the matter opened in this way."

This suggestion was acted upon and the meeting adjourned with general good feeling, and few, if any, seemed to realize that a tactful woman had averted serious trouble.

I will not attempt to tell of the discussions which followed in the official Board and in the church. When the question of the multiplicity of missionary societies in the church was being considered, Mr. Mitchell impressed all with his deep interest in every department of the work. I remember he said, "Brethren, we hear a great deal about

## A Faithful Steward

fundamentals in missions; there is but one fundamental, and that is loyalty to Jesus Christ. He died for all. The cause is one. The field is the world and we are to work and pray for the salvation of the lost everywhere." He insisted that a society properly constituted under the authority of the church is just as scriptural as a committee, and often far more effective.

The result of it all was that a resolution was adopted, that plans for the organization of societies, receiving the approval of the church, might be put into effect.

Following this we had fewer, but more efficient, societies than we had had before, and even Deacon Stearns said: "I am glad we have a pastor who can make folks"—and he looked at the women—"see what the Bible teaches." And Mrs. Sowerby said to some one near her: "It does not seem to occur to the deacon that there has a new idea or two got into his fossilized brain."

Doctor Spear had made trouble for several of our pastors. He thought he knew exactly how the work of the church ought to be carried on. He was free in the expression of his opinions, and also in his criticisms of the pastor. Mr. Green always felt

## The Church at Libertyville

that he was driven away by Doctor Spear. I would like to say right here, as a layman, that it seems to me that retired ministers ought to be careful not to take a prominent part in the business affairs of the church, and they ought to be especially careful in no way to hinder the work of the pastor or weaken his influence. Elder Heartwell, of whom I have already spoken, was a model of what a retired minister should be. Everybody loved him and he was a true helper of the pastor. Doctor Spear, however, was a very different man. I heard Mrs. Sharp say one day to Mrs. Bradley: "I wish that old backbiter, Doctor Spear, knew enough to mind his own business. It would be a blessing to the church if his voice would fail him again."

Before Mr. Mitchell had been with us a year it began to be known that he was not satisfactory to Doctor Spear. I think the real trouble was that the pastor did not put him forward and fuss over him enough to suit him. In fact, in sending delegates to a council somewhere, Doctor Spear was left off. I do not know that the pastor was responsible for this, but I heard Doctor Spear say to Deacon Stearns: "It seems that our services are not wanted any more.

## A Faithful Steward

I presume the pastor thinks it is better policy to put forward men whose pocket-books are more promising than ours." Deacon Stearns replied, "Maybe our theology is not sufficiently up-to-date to suit him."

Shortly after this, in a case of discipline which was before the pastor and deacons, Doctor Spear was not appointed on the committee of investigation and Charley Goodwill was put on. Doctor Spear, who sat next to me, said: "The pastor is utterly lacking in judgment. Charley Goodwill is no more fit than a ten-year-old boy for that position." I was afraid there was trouble ahead.

Not long after this Doctor Spear called on me at the store and wanted a private interview. He began: "Deacon Bradley, I come to you in my perplexity and distress for two reasons: first, I know you have the interests of our church deeply at heart; and secondly, I regard you as a man of discretion and sound judgment." He paused a moment to allow this bit of preliminary flattery to take effect and then proceeded: "I feel that you have not failed to observe what has, as I have reason to know, painfully impressed many; our pastor is not suited to this field. His pulpit ministrations

## The Church at Libertyville

might do for some little country place, but are utterly inadequate for a pulpit like ours. There are strong men, doctors of divinity, in the other pulpits of Libertyville, and we are suffering by comparison. I am told on good authority that Brother Mitchell never completed his theological course. His sermons show this. They lack coherence, logic, and cumulative effect. I have been looking up his record, and I find that he has never been regarded as a strong preacher. When Charley Goodwill and Elder Heartwell were put on that pulpit committee I knew a great mistake was being made. Neither one of them has the remotest idea of the first principles of homiletics."

"But," I interrupted, "Mr. Mitchell has not been here a year yet."

"That is just the point," added Doctor Spear; "his year is almost up and now is the time to act."

"His work seems to be prospering," I replied, "and I see no reason for a change."

"It may appear prosperous now," he said, "but I know that such preaching must result in failure, and we must act before the failure comes. I assure you there is nothing personal in this, and it gives me great

## A Faithful Steward

pain to move in this matter." But he got no encouragement from me and soon left.

The next week there was a special meeting of the deacons. When we came together I observed that Doctor Spear and Deacon Stearns were not there. The pastor called the meeting to order and said: "I do not know the object of this meeting; will Deacon Perkins, who called us, kindly state the business to come before us?"

Deacon Perkins replied: "I have asked you to come together for a conference upon a matter of great importance. I have learned that Doctor Spear is at his old tricks again, trying to unsettle the pastor, and I for one think it is about time to unsettle *him*. We have had enough of this kind of business. He came to me, one day last week, and with flattery and argument tried to persuade me to become a party to an effort to have our pastor close his work at the end of the year. And I find he has approached every other deacon except Charley Goodwill in the same way."

Before the pastor had an opportunity to speak Deacon Smith said: "I move that a committee of three be appointed to proceed with disciplinary measures against Doctor Spear." I immediately seconded the mo-

## The Church at Libertyville

tion. The pastor then spoke: "I am taken entirely by surprise by what has been stated. This is certainly a matter of gravity, and must not be dealt with hastily."

"If this were his first offense, pastor," added Deacon Smith, "this action might seem hasty, but Doctor Spear is an old offender along this line, and we are utterly tired of it."

"There is a scriptural injunction," replied the pastor, "about going first of all to thy brother alone to adjust difficulties. Before such action as you now propose is taken I would like to call on Doctor Spear. I think possibly we may be able to fix matters up."

After further discussion the motion was withdrawn to await the result of the pastor's interview with Doctor Spear. The interview was never made public. But this I know, we heard no more complaints from Doctor Spear, and he gradually became an earnest supporter of the pastor. Mrs. Spear told Mrs. Bradley: "The doctor says our pastor is a man of great plainness and kindness of speech, and that he had not fully understood him at first." And she added: "I do not know what has changed the doctor so, but he is becoming quite fond of

## **A Faithful Steward**

the pastor and thinks he is improving greatly in his preaching." I could not help saying to my wife: "The preaching has been all right all the time; I think the improvement is in the doctor himself."

A year or two after this the church just across the street from us had a popular preacher. He had crowded houses and the newspaper were constantly writing him up, and all Libertyville seemed carried away with Doctor Showman. Our congregations, especially in the evening, were seriously affected. Not a few of the members of our church were frequently seen at the church across the way. Matters went on in this way until some of us decided that something must be done. We determined to call together a few of the representative men of the church for a conference.

Let me say right here that my experience leads me to think that secret conferences of this nature are not to be encouraged. It is reasonably certain that they cannot be kept secret, and some who think they are representative men but who were not invited will make trouble, and some will imagine that the church is being run by a clique. But we thought we were doing all right and a conference was held at my

## The Church at Libertyville

home. There were ten present. After a discussion of several hours we reached the following conclusions: First, we must take steps to secure better music. There were two or three in the choir who would have to go out. In fact, several thought an entire reorganization was necessary. Secondly, disciplinary measures ought to be begun against those members who are leaving their own services to attend those of another church. We all regarded this as a grave offense. Thirdly, we were in favor of taking steps to get our pastor and our work into the newspapers more. We felt that the discriminations being made by the papers were unfair. Fourthly and finally, we decided that it should be kindly suggested to our pastor that he put more work on his sermons and give more careful attention to those things which would tend to make his pulpit ministrations attractive and popular. It was thought by one or two that possibly the time had come for a change in pastors, but all were agreed that such a step should not be considered until we had made a fair trial of the measures suggested. We adjourned to meet in one week, when we would have the pastor with us to lay before him our plans.

## A Faithful Steward

Before the time of the next meeting I met Doctor Spear on the street. Of course he had not been at the conference. He stopped me and said: "Deacon Bradley, I understand you and a few others are holding secret meetings to try to get rid of our pastor because he cannot draw crowds like that inflated dealer in bombast across the street. It seems to me, sir, that your little coterie is assuming altogether too much, and that you had better consult with some of the rest, and remember that the church is likely to have something to say about this." I saw he was very much excited and assured him that he was entirely mistaken, that no one was trying to get rid of the pastor. But I confess that what he said made me feel very uncomfortable.

The next meeting was held and the pastor was present. He listened intently to the suggestions we had to make, and I saw on his face an expression of pain that made me heartily wish that I had had nothing to do with this business. He then, with manifest effort to control his emotions and with an earnestness that touched every heart, said: "Brethren, I have not been blind to the situation which causes you so much anxiety and which has led to this

## The Church at Libertyville

conference, and I have been trying to do my work with greater faithfulness and devotion. I have listened with profound interest to your suggestions, but I fear the thought which underlies them is not the right one to control in this matter. Your plan is for us to enter into direct competition with our neighboring church. To do this is to fail. I cannot lead you in a movement of this kind, and if I thought these suggestions were the result of your mature and final judgment I should feel that my work as your pastor would have to terminate. Sensationalism in religion is short-lived and harmful. Our duty is not to try to outdo some one else, but to give ourselves fully to the Master's service for his glory. If we will do this we need have no concern about the outcome of the work." He paused a moment and then added: "I have no question whatever of the sincerity of the brethren before me, but the fact of your conference last week is known throughout the church and its purpose is misunderstood. I fear that serious trouble is likely to result unless great care is exercised. I think, however, that I can make a statement next Sunday morning which will set everything right if you wish it."

## A Faithful Steward

Charley Goodwill was the first to speak: "This is not the first time I have made a fool of myself. I see it all now and am ashamed of myself, and ask the pastor to forgive me. I am in favor of dropping this whole matter right here and now, and of asking the pastor to fix it up for us the best he can; and then let us all enter upon the work of the church with renewed zeal and hold no more secret conferences."

All agreed with him. In his statement the pastor dwelt upon his desire and the earnest desire of some of the brethren and the wish of all for better things in the church. He made no allusion whatever to the other church, but so opened his heart and so magnified our real needs that from that day the tide turned, and the blessings began to come. I have often thought how easily he might have made everything different. I am satisfied that there would be very little trouble in our churches if all the pastors had the spirit and tact which characterized Brother Mitchell. I do not mean to say that the pastors are usually the cause of church troubles, but I do believe that they have it within their power to prevent the most of them.

I might go on indefinitely with these

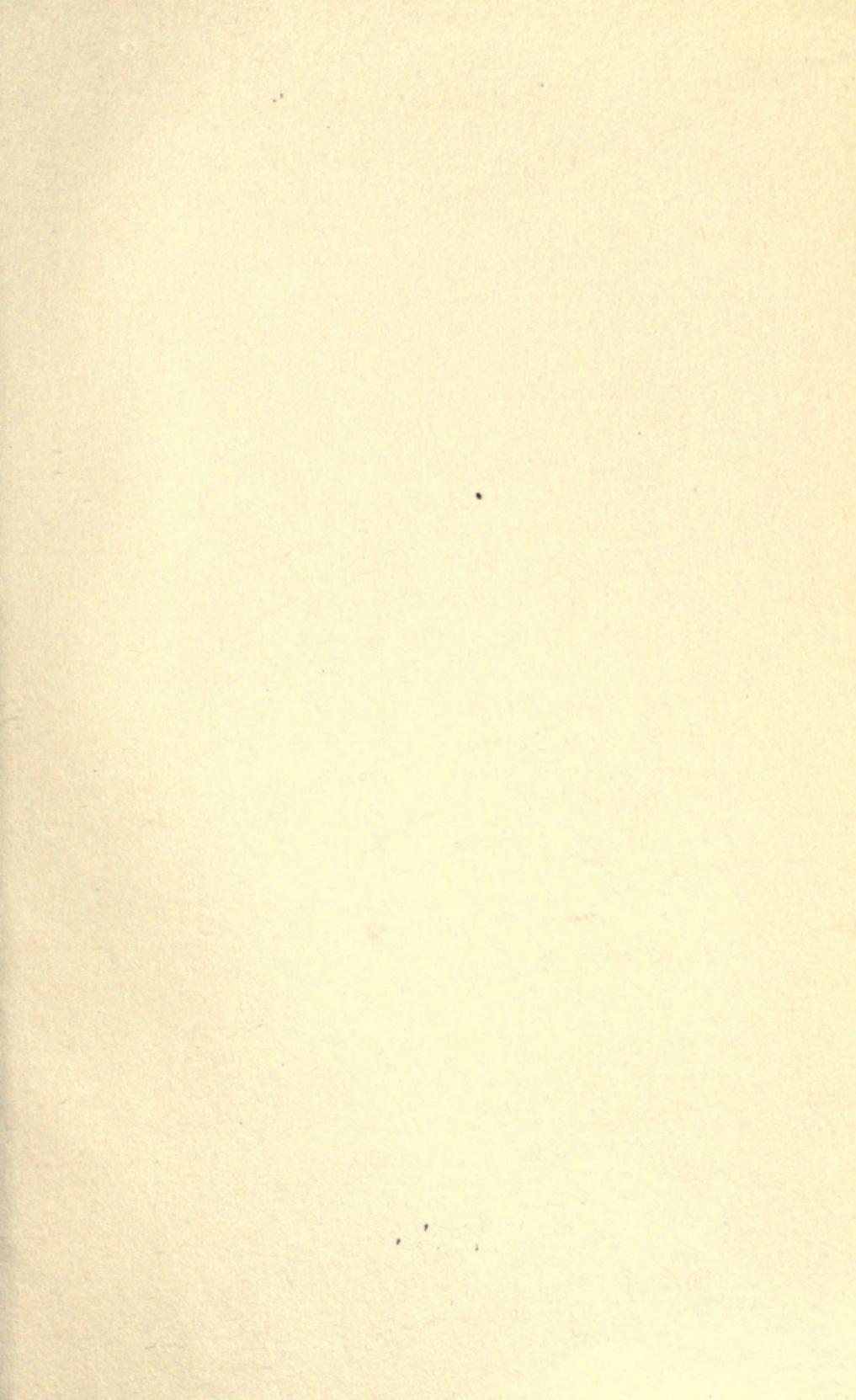
## The Church at Libertyville

Libertyville reminiscences, but I fear I have already become tiresome, and will stop here. I am grateful to any who have been sufficiently interested to read what I have written. It has been a great pleasure to me to live over again in memory so many of the dear old Libertyville days, and it is with a feeling of regret that I lay down my pen.

In reviewing what I have written I wonder if I have dwelt so much upon the peculiarities of some of the good folks, and upon the troubles which arose from time to time, as to leave a wrong impression in the minds of any. The church of God is very dear to me. It is the grandest institution on earth, and I am sure that the noblest, most self-sacrificing, most Christlike men and women in this world are found among those who are bearing the burdens and directing the activities of the churches.

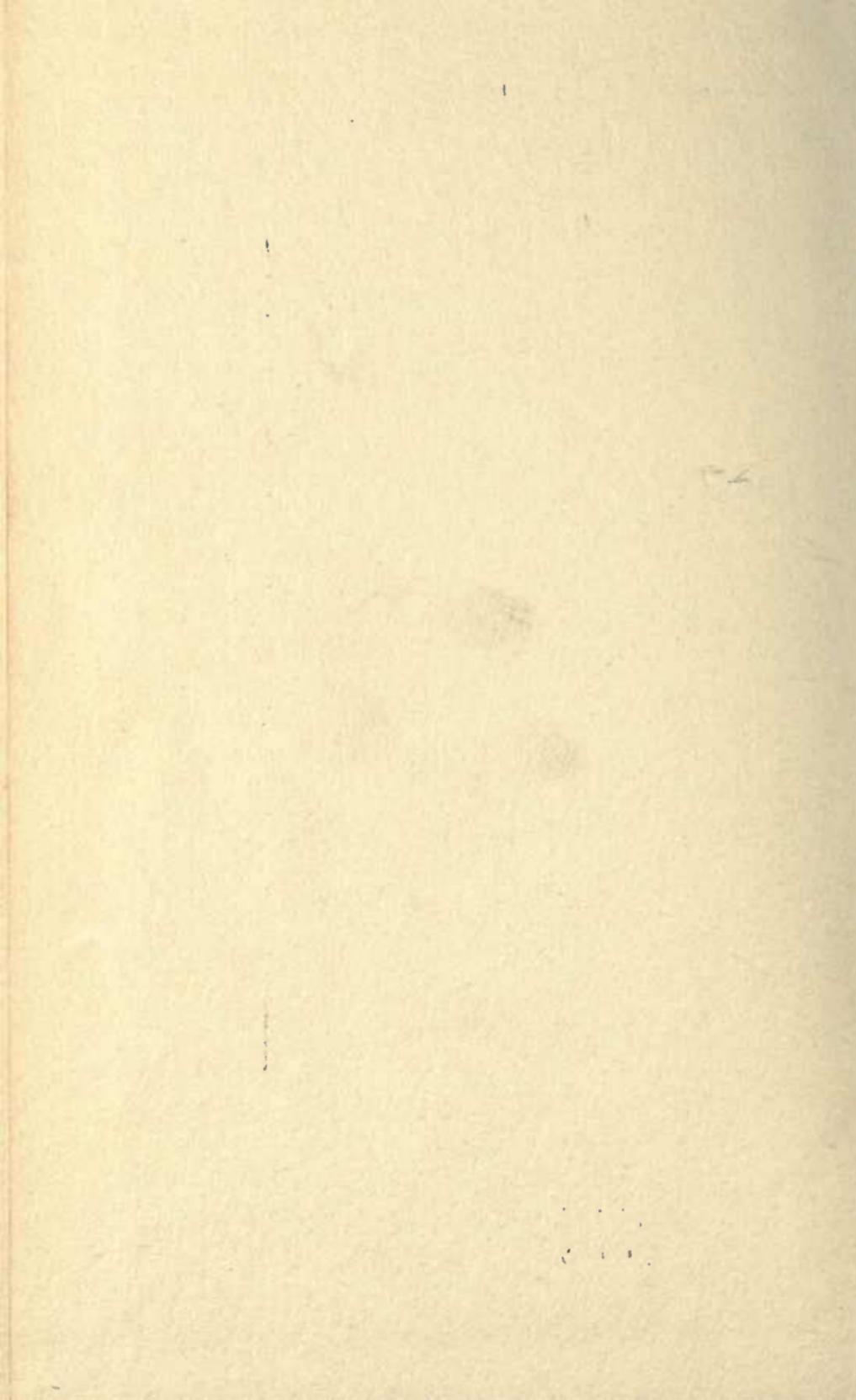
I love thy kingdom, Lord!  
The house of thine abode,  
The church our blest Redeemer saved  
With his own precious blood.

For her my tears shall fall,  
For her my prayers ascend;  
To her my cares and toils be given,  
Till toils and cares shall end.













UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**A 000 085 628 6**

